

(1 Corinthians 15:1-11, NIV84)

"Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first

importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them-yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed."

As I drove past the golf course just to the north of my neighborhood today, the parking lot was absolutely jam-packed. Golfers had come out in droves to once again engage in a favorite pastime. I also saw on social media how someone was decrying the fact that people were making a beeline for the Wisconsin bars that had reopened, as though there were things far more important to do than to patronize their favorite watering hole.

I can fully understand people's desires to get out of the house and return to the activities and social groups they have been denied access to for the past few months. It has indeed been a long wait.

But there are things "of first importance", and going to the local pub or going golfing do not rise to that level. As your favorite stores or establishments reopen, enjoy the fact that you are able to return to them, but don't forget that when you have the opportunity to return to gather for public worship, that you make the most of every opportunity. Go and hear of Christ who "died for our sins", "was buried" and "was raised on the third day." Be assured of your salvation in Jesus. Be strengthened by Word and Sacrament for the forgiveness of your sins. Be built up as a follower of Christ to face the manifold trials and tribulations of this life.

There will be time for socializing with friends and engaging in favorite pastimes, but keep things "of first importance" first.

Saved by the gospel with you in Christ,
Pastor Golm

May 16

Amazing Grace

By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

It is said of John Newton that one day he saw a drunken ne'er-do-well lying on a street in London. Looking at the man compassionately, he remarked: "There, but by the grace of God, am I."

How true-of all of us! Where would we be, were it not for the unmerited love and mercy of our God, showered upon us through Jesus Christ, his Son? We have been saved alone by his grace- his grace in Holy Baptism, in the Holy Supper, in the fellowship of the Christian congregation, in the influence of Christian parents and a Christian home.

Each of us, as we contemplate the redeeming and sustaining power of God's grace in our life, must confess with the poet, Horatius Bonar:

All that I was, my sin, my guilt, My death, was all my own;
All that I am I owe to Thee, My gracious God, alone.

Indeed, without his initiative-the initiative of divine compassion revealed on Calvary's cross-our spiritual condition at this moment would be most pitiable. We must confess with the apostle Paul that it was only God's grace, his undeserved mercy, that saved us and made us what we are-children of God and heirs of heaven. With the poet John Newton we sing:

Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.

Praise God for his abundant mercy!

O Lord, I thank You for Your amazing grace that saved a wretch like me. May Your grace attend my every day until my journey's end. Amen.

(Devotion from: Daily Walk With God - Meditations for Every Day, by Herman W. Gockel)