



St. Stephen's Traditional Episcopal Church

11856 Mays Chapel Rd., Timonium, MD 21093

Epiphany II, Sunday, January 15th, 2012

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave fast to that which is good.

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠**

In the parable of the good shepherd Jesus says: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

In today's epistle Saint Paul gives the church some practical guidelines on achieving that more abundant life in Christ here on God's good earth.

First, we must remember that men's psyches are more distinctive than their fingerprints. Each of us has "gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us," but the grace of God is the spring and origin of all our gifts.

God lives forever in perfect being and a sharing of that perfection is what Jesus is offering us. He is not setting up a self help list of precepts and admonitions the

adherence to which is an impossible goal. Rather he is offering the help of his grace to those with broken and contrite hearts repent of their sins.

St. Paul counsels us: "Let love be without dissimulation." True love does not begin with us but with God. It is his gift to us, the grace to love him and one another without pretense or hypocrisy. God loves us without any hidden agenda. We, on the other hand, have a propensity to hold back in loving; keeping some of our love for ourselves; trying to figure out the motives of others; afraid of being hurt.

God's love, by contrast, couldn't be more straightforward. We need only look at God's Son on the Cross to abandon all doubt about the openness, the purity of God's love

for us. When we see God Incarnate dying for us and in our place, we know that God is asking nothing for himself. We know that every commandment that God gives us is for our benefit, since believing in him or not, obeying him or not, cannot make him other than all-powerful God. Believing and obeying Him, however, can enable us to live our lives more fully in the eternal love of God.

Everything good in life, and in an eternity of life, starts with the love of God – the love that he gives to us and the love that he enables us to give by his grace. But what are we to do with this God-given ability? Saint Paul continues by saying that we are to: “Abhor that which is evil, cleave fast to that which is good.”

It is impossible to live a good life without detesting whatever is evil. Evil should appall us. Evil is not a viable alternative to the good, rather it is a perversion of the good aimed at the destruction of the Good. Evil is always a form of violence, primarily against God, and secondarily against man, the creature made in the image of God. It doesn't matter whether evil assaults the body, the mind, or the soul of man. Evil is totally abhorrent and should fill us with outrage.

But mere outrage at evil does not enable us to live an abundant life as God would have us do. Paul tells us that we must cling to that which is good. Identifying perversion is inadequate unless we can point to the proper choice for decent men and women. We need to embrace the innocent and glorious Christ and cling to the life he offers us in his resurrected majesty.

The Holy Spirit working in our lives gives us the ability to see the beautiful as well as the ugly and the power to choose to live in beauty rather than in ugliness. Our lives can be beautiful in Christ, just as they can be pointless and ugly without him. We work out the power of God's grace by loving completely and by living completely in the growing power of our relationship to Christ and his grace working in our lives.