

Grace, mercy and peace are yours in abundance through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰ And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. **This is God's Word.**

Dear Friends,

Could you imagine having a job with the following qualifications: you are on your feet all of the time. You are required to pick up things of every size and weight. You have to be able to bend and to sometimes run. You are on call 24/7 and can try and catch some sleep here and there but don't count on 8 full hours. You have to have some knowledge of medicine and decorating skills and culinary skills are a plus. You also must have the ability to teach and to mediate disputes and to be a master scheduler. You need a driver's license so that you can make deliveries. The job pays absolutely nothing but sometimes you will get unexpected rewards. If you haven't guessed it yet, I am talking about moms. On this Mother's Day we want to note that it is not easy being a mom, but we are all thankful for our moms who have loved us and taught us and cared for us.

We have high expectations for our moms and at times they struggle to meet those expectations and to fulfill their responsibilities. But there are others for whom we have high expectations as well like Dads and our Christian friends and others. And as we consider the portion of scripture before us we can see that God has high expectations for us too. We can see that in Paul's prayer for the Christians at Colosse, when he prayed that they live a life worthy of the Lord. That is a pretty high standard but this morning as we consider this portion of scripture may we see how God helps us to, **"Live a Life Worthy of the Lord."** God does that by, **"Qualifying Us,"** and by, **"Filling us with what we need."**

I. I'm always amazed at God's great love for me. I don't deserve it, but he loves me anyways and in this portion of scripture Paul talks about living a life worthy of the Lord. That's a pretty high standard that God has set for us and yet he helps us as we strive to live that kind of life. Paul tells us that we should joyfully give thanks to the Father, **"Who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."**

Normally, to be qualified you have to do something – you have to pass some kind of test to show that you deserve the qualification. But our qualification didn't begin with a test to see what we know but rather with a rescue from a bad situation. We were once in the dominion of

darkness and we didn't even realize how perilous our situation was. Everything seemed fine to us but darkness can hide a lot of harmful things and if we stay in the dark, sooner or later we will suffer injury – maybe even life-threatening injury.

Paul uses this reference to darkness as a reference to our lives before we were brought to faith. For many of us that period of darkness wasn't very long. We came into this world in the dominion of darkness but then we were filled with the light of salvation through the sacrament of holy Baptism shortly after we were born.

But at times we still venture into the realm of darkness. Every time we disobey God's Word we are stepping away from the light and into the darkness. Maybe it was when we shared that bit of gossip or spread a rumor about someone we knew. Maybe it was when we saw a friend or relative in need but didn't help them because we didn't want to give up any of our time or money or effort. Maybe it was when we were mean or rude to someone because we just didn't want to bother with them. There are many times when we slip into darkness in spite of the light that is shining in our heart. At those times, you might say, the light is somewhat dim.

But Paul reminds us that we have been rescued by God's Son and in him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins and that is vital for our spiritual life. For all those times when we show a lack of love and are selfish and don't want to bother, and commit the other sins we hope no one finds out about, Paul reminds us that Jesus paid for those sins. So, as we come confessing them, Christ assures us that we have redemption in him – we have forgiveness for our sins and that qualifies us to live a life worthy of the Lord. Not a perfect life, but a life of repentance and forgiveness. A life that trusts in Jesus for forgiveness and looks to him to help us stay away from the darkness that seems to lure us in different ways. And Jesus does that for us because of his great love for us. He wants us to receive that inheritance of eternal life with him in heaven.

Once I had a man tell me that we are all headed for the same place. We are just going to get there by different paths. He likened it to many streams flowing into one big river. He told me we are traveling down these different streams in our faith life and some have more obstacles than others but eventually they all flow into the big river and that leads to our final destination in heaven. I thought that sounds pretty good but it was so wrong.

Peter once said, **“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”** (Acts 4:12) and Jesus said, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** (John 14:6) There is only one way to heaven and that is through faith in Jesus as our Savior. That is what qualifies us for the inheritance reserved for all believers – faith in Jesus and nothing else and that is why we want to live a life worthy of the Lord, but once again, how do we do that, even when we are qualified?

II. We are able to do that because God fills us up with what we need. Paul prays that God will fill us up with spiritual wisdom and understanding and God does just that as he speaks to us through his Word and as we read our Bibles and devotional books. It is through these means of

grace that he fills us with spiritual wisdom that enables us to live our lives for him. Then Paul gives us a list that helps us to see how we are doing.

He says that if we are living a life worthy of the Lord we will **“bear fruit in every good work.”** In other words, we not only come and hear what God's Word says to us but we also try to do what it says. Our spiritual life isn't only one hour on Sunday but it continues throughout the week as we go out into the world.

Paul also says that to live a life worthy of the Lord we will also want to **“grow in the knowledge of God.”** This one is simple to understand. Paul is saying that we should read and study God's Word. Think of it this way. Right now we are fertilizing plants and trees to keep them healthy and to help them grow. In the same way we want to “fertilize” our faith – feed it with the nutrients of God's Word to keep it healthy and to help it to grow.

Then Paul says another indicator of living a life worthy of the Lord is to **“be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience”** – we have been experiencing some storms and high winds. Trees and fences and outside items need strength and strong roots to stand firm. This portion of scripture reminds us of the storms of relational problems, health problems and the general influences of the world that can affect all these plus our jobs. With God's help we can stand firm and give a faithful witness to what the word says. God brings us calmness in the midst of the storm and takes away our fear.

Finally, Paul reminds us that as we live a life worthy of the Lord it will be evident as we **“give thanks to the Father.”** He sent his Son to redeem us. He created the world in which we live. He provides for our needs and so much more and so we want to live a life of thanksgiving and bring joyful prayers of thanksgiving.

Being a mom is a hard job and yet when your children hug you and tell you they love you, it is all worth it. When you see your children succeed in life, it is all worth it. Living our lives as Christians isn't always so easy, especially as Paul encourages us to live a life worthy of the Lord. But God has qualified us for this kind of life by redeeming us and giving us the gift of faith. Through this gift we are able to see God's will for our lives and through this gift of faith we receive encouragement and strength to live a life worthy of the Lord. Not because we are better than anyone else but because we are forgiven and loved by our Savior. And just as it is wonderful when a child tells their mom they love them, so God smiles as we express our love for him and live a life according to his Word. Amen.