

# 40 Days of Fitness

A daily devotional by Rev Garry Hardingham

## DAY 17 – God’s Grace in the Community of the Church

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.*

Titus 2:11-14

A new member of the faith had only been in the church for a few weeks and was disturbed by all the gossip and political machinations he encountered every Sunday. Totally confused, he approached the minister and asked if there was one of the Ten Commandments that he should particularly know when dealing with other members of the congregation. “Easy”, said the minister, “Thou shalt not kill.”

It’s easy to forget that sometimes God’s Grace finds its hardest work in the church itself. Because, unless we are all related, the congregation is often a mixed bag of personalities, cultures, theological understandings and political agendas. It’s one of the few places where a motor mechanic, a bank manager, a widow, a school girl, a recovering drug addict and a schizophrenic car salesman engage in the common act of worship, prayer, teaching and breaking bread together. Not even the footy has the diversity that is often found in our churches. Indeed even a Cowboys supporter like me can happily break bread with a Bronco supporter...at least after a prayer of forgiveness for their sin.

What makes God’s Grace so necessary for the Church?

Well, apart from what we’ve covered over the past week, it is the Grace of God that binds such a diverse group together. In the gathering of the church we seek to make real the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth by laying down our own identities and focusing, at least for an hour or so, on our identity in Christ.

In the act of worship, in the coming together at the Lord’s table, we come into mystical union with Christ and are invited to lay down our desires and to take up His cross in service to each other who are gathered as His community and then be sent forth to proclaim His grace to a broken world.

And this is the gift of the church!

We should not take it lightly. Nor should we seek our aggrandisement in it. For we all come equal before our God, each gifted by the Holy Spirit in particular ways in order that together we may be His body.

Over the next week or so, we are going to explore how we are church and what God expects from us as His church. As the Rend Collective sing in “Build Your Kingdom Here”, “We are Your church, We are the hope on earth.”

### PRAYER

Loving Father,  
In your goodness and mercy,  
grant that I might regain all the graces  
which I have lost through my foolishness and folly.  
Remind me that I am no better  
nor worse in Your eyes  
than every other person around me.  
Let the Grace I receive from You  
manifest itself in my presence  
amongst the gathered community.  
And may I have the grace and forbearance  
to see Your grace in my brothers and sisters.  
In Christ’s gracious and loving name.  
Amen