

Grace and peace are yours dear friends from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We are in the season of Pentecost; the color of green adorns the sanctuary of the church to represent the growth of the Kingdom of God. The church (the Kingdom of God) is established when Christ came to this world and began to bear fruit when our Lord conquered death. Since then, the Church has been growing at the will of the Spirit, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the glory of God. This is, my friends, what God pre-ordained before the foundations of the world were laid.

Growth is the primary image in all our scripture readings today and while the similes and metaphors of trees, wheat, mustard seeds, and even faith are used, the grown that is referenced in our readings is the increase and expansion of the Kingdom of God that is continuing to a place and time when peace will pass all understanding.

Depending upon our age, we may have heard the words of Holy Scripture today many times, but today I encourage you to hear them with new hope, new life, and new faith... because this is a very exciting and special time in the life of the church; this is the final days of growth for God's Kingdom and the time to bring the story of God's love (the Good News) to those who have not heard.

Today is reason for excitement and new life because we celebrate and lift up two special young adults who are graduating from High School and moving on to the next stages of their lives. Two people who are expanding their knowledge and understanding to take their place in the Kingdom of God and prepare for the positions God has, and will, equip them for. Dalton and Danielle are excited about their future, and rightfully so; they have the world in front of them and the sky is the limit to what they can accomplish.

Dalton and Danielle may or may not know what is entirely possible for them, but as their parents and church family, we know through our experience that they only need to engage and face the opportunities to make a difference. We know that God is good, gracious, and generous to where He guides us into vocations that utilized our greatest gifts and blessings for the sake of others; meaning we find joy in what we do. And by this we can serve out of love instead of serving out of obligation. And when we serve out of love my friends, we reveal the love of God through Jesus Christ in our person, our actions, and our words. When we serve out of love, we allow God to use our hands for His work.

To some extent, this sounds easy, maybe too easy because the truth is that life gets in the way of even the best Scripture passages. As the Kingdom took root and grew, so did the problems, temptations, and corruptions to our lives that cloud many of us from seeing the person and nature of Christ within each other. Sin still runs rampant in this world, accidents still happens, crime still rages...making it very difficult at times to see and understanding that this IS the Kingdom of God.

For that matter, its rather difficult to see that the Kingdom of God is growing and thriving given all the pain and suffering that is literally 'out of control'. And this... is the goal of the tempter; the objective of the adversary, the primary task of Satan; to take away the hope that is securely ours forever.

Dalton and Danielle, if your lives are remotely similar to anyone else present today, you will run into times of trouble, crisis, and even defeat. You will question the decision you have made, maybe the friends you have chosen, possibly even the beliefs you hold. I can assure each of you that you have the prayers, hopes, and blessings of all of us today that you will not encounter times of darkness. However, if and when you do, it is your faith, a very special gift from God that will ensure you are brought safely through that darkness to a place of comfort, safety, and light.

Life in the Kingdom is lived by faith for now; faith that will become sight for each of us, faith that is now sight for the many saints who have gone before us. Jesus tells us if we had faith the size of a mustard seed we could move mountains and today Jesus uses the same mustard seed to show how the Kingdom of God began. In both cases, the seed is going to grow my friends... the Kingdom of God has grown as the Spirit has directed and so does our faith, each from a very small beginning.

So faith to live by begins as the most humble and modest understanding of God and our relationship with God. As we grow in grace, our faith (like the mustard seed) grows and sustains us as we grow in life and relationships with one another. At the heart of this faith, hope, and growth is a the solid foundation of Jesus Christ and the full and complete love of God; a love that knows no compromise or end, a love that endure forever.

My friends, you have heard these words; Dalton and Danielle, you will hear these words many times again in your life. Each time you do hear these words, it is my prayer that God will grant you the new joy, the new life, the new hope that leads to new growth in faith.

Faith today, trust today can and will allow us to see and realize the Kingdom of God. Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians that through faith, we will see the new creation and that the old (everything that is old) has passed away. Now my dear friends in Christ at the end of the book of Revelation, the closing book of Holy Scriptures, John records the words; “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away”.

We live by faith, grow in grace, and serve with love. All these, my friends, are granted by God to glorify our Father in heaven who has chosen to make His home among mortals and dwell with His us; His people. The days of loneness, fear, hunger, pain, and suffering have passed when we rely upon faith to see the reality of the Kingdom of God that is here and now.

Dalton and Danielle, as our faith grows and the love of God is revealed through your lives, may the peace that passes all understanding keep all our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.