

Dear First Baptist Church Mansfield Family and Friends,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. As I read the letters the Apostle Paul wrote to the first-century Christian churches I realized that they faced many of the same worldly pressures we face in the twenty-first-century Christian churches. In a world that measures nearly everything by results, it is easy to believe that success is the same as faithfulness. We count attendance, dollars, accomplishments, awards, promotions, and visible growth. Those things are not always wrong, and sometimes they can be signs of blessing. But Scripture reminds us that God's first question is not, "How impressive were you?" but, "Were you faithful?"

The difference matters. Success often depends on outcomes we cannot fully control. Faithfulness depends on obedience, love, perseverance, and trust. A farmer can plant, water, and tend the soil, but only God can give the growth. In the same way, we are called to serve, pray, teach, encourage, forgive, give, and witness—even when the results are slower, smaller, or quieter than we hoped.

First Corinthians 4:2 says, "Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." A steward is someone entrusted with something that belongs to another. Our time, talents, families, church, community, and witness all belong to God. We are not asked to produce perfect numbers or flawless records. We are asked to handle what God has given us with humility and trust.

Jesus showed us this clearly. By many worldly standards, His ministry did not look "successful," especially at the foot of the cross. The crowds scattered. Friends denied Him. Enemies mocked Him. Yet in that very moment, Jesus was perfectly faithful to the Father's will. What looked like defeat became the victory of grace. God's kingdom often grows through hidden obedience, sacrificial love, and seeds planted in faith.

This is good news for First Baptist Church Mansfield. It means that Myra, our adult Sunday school teacher, who prepares week after week for a small class is faithful. All of you who pray quietly for friends and family members that continue to hold a place on the prayer concern list are faithful. Those of you who set up chairs, washes dishes, makes phone calls, visits the lonely, or writes a note of encouragement are faithful. The parents and grandparents who keep pointing a child toward Christ are faithful. These acts may not make headlines, but they matter deeply to God.

Of course, faithfulness can bear visible fruit. Some of our sister churches are growing. Ministries are flourishing, despite our small attendance. Lives are changing in ways others can see. We can and should rejoice when God brings such fruit. But we must be careful not

to make visible success our master. If we do, discouragement will rise whenever numbers fall, and pride may rise whenever numbers grow. Faithfulness keeps our eyes on Christ in both seasons.

So perhaps the better question for us is not, “Are we successful?” but, “Are we being faithful with what God has placed before us today?” Are we loving our neighbors? Are we praying for one another? Are we welcoming the stranger? Are we telling the truth with grace? Are we forgiving as we have been forgiven? Are we trusting God with the outcome?

May First Baptist Church Mansfield be a people who celebrate faithfulness—not because results do not matter, but because results belong to God. Our calling is to follow Christ, serve with love, and remain steady in hope. And one day, by God’s grace, may we hear the words Jesus spoke in His parable: “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Blessings,

*Rev. Cheryl Filsen*