

“The church rekindled – 1st and 2nd Timothy”

October 30, 2022
Reformation Sunday

God calls us to worship:

Responsive reading: Psalm 32:1-7, 11

Hymn: #332 “O Lord my God”

We respond in praise, confession, and supplication:

Prayers of Praise and supplication (*Please remain standing*):

God of creation and compassion,
You hear the cries of your people.
You know our fear and despair.
In your great love, you assure us that you walk with us in Christ Jesus.
In this time of worship,
we long to see your new heaven and new earth break through,
making your justice known and life fruitful for all your children.
We praise you for the hope you offer us in Christ Jesus.
We trust that you are at work in your church and in creation
so all that is broken will be made new.
Through our prayers and our praise,
strengthen our trust in your promised future, O God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Prayers of Confession (*Please be seated; said in unison*):

Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you
with our whole heart, mind, and strength;
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy
forgive what we have been,
amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
so that we may delight in your will
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name.
Amen.

Assurance of grace: 1 Timothy 1:15; 2:5

(*The response to: “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good” is: “His love endures forever.”*)

God speaks to us:

Prayer for illumination

Reading of Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 10-17; 4:1-8
(The response to “This is the word of the Lord” is “**Thanks be to God.**”)

The crown of righteousness

This is the concluding sermon for the series we began back in September entitled: “The church rekindled: 1st and 2nd Timothy.”

In 1st Timothy we learned that the church prepared to be rekindled by the Holy Spirit is the community of Christ’s disciples that gather in prayer – making supplications, intercessions, and thanksgivings to God through Christ for everyone. It’s the community that’s engaged in caring – in the name of Jesus – for those in vulnerable situations. It’s the community that is organized and governed by deacons, ruling elders, teaching elders, and bishops to ensure the saints are equipped to continue Christ’s ministry and edified in sound doctrine concerning the person and work of Jesus, the use of Scripture, and how one ought to behave in the household of God.

In 2nd Timothy, Paul moved his focus from the institution of the church to the character and faith of its members. We learned that the church prepared to be rekindled by the Holy Spirit is the community whose members are not ashamed of the testimony of Jesus. Who are not ashamed that there is one God in fellowship with whom all things derive eternal meaning; that there is one mediator between God and humanity and that is Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, descended from David, who gave his life a ransom for all, and who is raised from the dead. And, having no shame in the gospel, the church prepared to be rekindled by the Holy Spirit is the community whose members are strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus: who have conviction in the cause, trust the ways and wisdom of the Lord, obey His Word, and dedicate themselves to their work of gracefully making known the one living and triune God in their everyday experiences – whether they see the results or not.

In these two letters, the apostle Paul has presented a framework for the Christian church to endure in a culture that regards it as either irrelevant or as a threat.

Today, we finish our study.

READ 2ND TIMOTHY 3:1-5, 10-17; 4:1-8.

1. From his place of imprisonment, while he awaited the trial that would probably result in his execution, the apostle Paul would have had considerable opportunity to think over his life. While he thus reflected, this man – who had once been the prime persecutor of Christians; who had the authority of the Emperor to kill anyone who uttered the words “Jesus is Lord and Saviour”; who held the cloaks of those who stoned to death the first Christian martyr, Stephen who also, since his conversion, suffered sicknesses and shipwrecks, opposition, hostility, persecution, beatings, and imprisonments –was reminded of the truth that the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, and the lifestyle it demands in response is the power of God in the world.

Paul was more sure than ever that the sacred writings are trustworthy; that there is one living God who is real, good, and able; that Jesus of Nazareth is the only mediator between humanity and God; and that the behaviour and attitudes described in the Word of God can actually affect change in the world that rightly glorifies God and brings our souls into ever-closer union with Christ.

So, in his last words to Timothy, by evoking his own memories, he encouraged Timothy that God is real, Jesus is the Messiah, scripture is trustworthy, and godliness has power.

Paul urged Timothy to imitate Paul’s self and fight the good fight of faith – whether the time is favourable or unfavourable.

2. There are those who would say that we are in an unfavourable time for the church in Canada. Especially in comparison to previous decades. Most people view Christianity with either indifference: as either irrelevant or, perhaps, something that’s good for you if it helps you but I don’t need to be bothered with it; or, because of past experiences and our past actions, with outright hostility.

What’s more, they would argue that even within the church itself, we are in distressing times as the church is being led astray by teachers who do not hold to sound doctrine “that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God” and instead teach what suits the desires of their hearers who are looking to their own pleasure rather than God’s.

And, in some respects, that is probably the case. As it was in Ephesus where Timothy pastored and as it has been in every generation since. We are, if nothing else, a mixed bag of belief!

Which means, that while everyone is trying to affect their own salvation by doing whatever they deem is “right” for themselves, Christians today are in an ideal situation to point our neighbours and family members – and even our own selves! – to another way. To the only way that will result in holistic and eternal salvation: the way of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the lifestyle it demands in response.

3. Paul wrote that there is power in godliness; in living a godly life in Christ Jesus. A power which those who reject God’s ways and wisdom miss.

Power is the ability to do work. Power turns on lights, pulls ploughs, and builds houses.

Godliness refers to those actions and attitudes that are well-pleasing to God.

We don’t have to speculate on what is well-pleasing to God. By His grace he has inspired men and women to write down, preserve, translate, and pass on “the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” “All scripture,” writes Paul (which includes the Old Testament (which is all Paul would have had) as well as the New) “is *useful* for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.”

When we live according to the wisdom and ways of God as revealed in the stories, sermons, prayers, and histories of the Bible, the living and triune God affects goodness through us in this world – whether our circumstances would suggest that to be true or not!

It may seem like our situation is hopeless. The distressing times may threaten to crumble our house and wash us away. But Jesus once told a story of a man who both knew God’s words and obeyed them. The result of such a persistent and trusting obedience was like a house built on a solid-rock foundation: when the rains came down, and the floods came up – as they will – the house on the rock stood still!

4. Paul knew this first-hand.

He knew what it is to deny Jesus.

And he knew what it is to live in total, trusting obedience to Jesus.

Paul knew the sufferings and struggles that are sure to attack those who want to live a godly life in Christ. Whether that be overt, state-sanctioned persecutions, or the difficulty that comes with living slightly out-of-step with friends and relatives.

He also knew that *Jesus* is Lord of lords and King of kings and that all other forms of empire and attempts at salvation are temporary. God's kingdom is the only eternal kingdom.

And for those who endure our momentary struggles, holding fast to the faith revealed in scripture, learning the Jesus of scripture, and obeying his words, there waits for you a crown of righteousness when Christ returns to judge with perfect justice, the living and the dead.

Amen.

We respond by affirming our faith, offering our tithes, and prayer:

Hymn: #765 “We’ve a story to tell to the nations”

Apostles’ Creed (*see bulletin insert for text*)

Offering:

(*Offering plates are presented at the Communion Table while congregation sings:*)

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
praise him all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost**

Prayer of dedication

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession:

God of our past and our future,

God of healing and hope,

We come before you with grateful hearts

trusting that you walk with us through all the times of our lives.

We give you thanks for all the benefits we share

in a nation with many resources and many opportunities.

Yet we remember before you the many who do not have enough
and cannot see their way forward.

We remember before you those living with hunger

and communities struggling with the impact of fire and storm, earthquake and
famine.

Keep silence for 10-15 seconds

We pray for all those working to relieve suffering in so many precious lives
here and around the world.

God of these present times,

We give you thanks that we live in a country of relative peace and good order,
a place where injustices past and present become subjects of investigation.

We pray for the work of healing and reconciliation

engaging indigenous communities with other citizens in this land.

Open hearts in mutual understanding and provide opportunities for common
enterprise.

We pray for those who have come to Canada,

fleeing violence and deprivation in their homelands.

Provide comfort and support through the generosity of neighbours

and protect newcomers from misunderstanding and discrimination.

Guide us to create a sense of home that all can share.

God of time beyond our imagining,

We give you thanks for all we learn through scientific investigation

that stretches us to reimagine your creation in its vast mystery and beauty.

Thank you for increasing insight in medical science

and the possibilities it adds to your gifts of hope and healing.

We pray for all those who work in health care in this stressful time,

for patients waiting for treatment

and for those whose conditions find no relief.
Bless them with your Spirit of courage and comfort.
Thank you for increasing insight in climate science
and the awareness it gives about the impact of our lives on the wellbeing of the
earth.
Create better agreement and cooperation in our communities
to protect the earth for future generations
by the ways we adapt our lifestyles now.
Bless us all with your Spirit of courage and commitment.

God of all life and each life,
In these moments of silence we hold before you those on our hearts this day
who need to know you are near and that we care for them too:

Keep silence for 20 seconds.

Make us signs of hope and healing for every life we touch
for we are the followers of Jesus who dare to pray together the words he taught
us:

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: #690 "Fight the good fight"

God sends us with God's blessing:

Benediction

Congregation sings "Amen"