

Written Copy: Don't Be Ashamed-2 Timothy 1:6-9
Proper 22: 17th Sunday @ Pentecost [LWML Sunday]
Sunday October 6th, 2019

Text: 2 Timothy 1:6-9

⁶For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. ⁸Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ⁹who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

⁶On account of this reason I am reminding you to continue to rekindle the flame of the free gift of grace from God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷For God has not given us a spirit lacking courage or of timidity but of power to perform His will, and sacrificial love, and self-control (sensible behavior). ⁸Therefore you should not be ashamed by the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but you must suffer together with the Gospel by the means of the power of God, ⁹The One who has saved us and has called us with a holy (divine) calling, not according to our works, but according to His own specific purpose and according to the grace that has been given to us in Christ Jesus before time eternal,

Exegetical Statement

Paul is writing to Timothy a personal letter that is his final encouragement to his understudy and bishop he left over the churches in Asia Minor. He calls to Timothy's attention that regardless of how Rome sees followers of Christ, they are actually following in the faith that Abraham was called to, the faith of the Church throughout time. The Lord gave that faith to Paul and through the witness of his mother, grandmother, and Paul himself it now flourishes in Timothy. Paul longs to see his son in the faith one last time out of love for him and out of concern that he continues his vocation of proclaiming the truth that is Christ crucified and risen. Even though Paul is branded a criminal deserving of death Paul doesn't want Timothy to be ashamed of him or too scared to continue to proclaim Christ. The same Christ who saved Timothy by the Gospel will work to keep that faith alive and aflame in him. Timothy was given the Holy Spirit in power when he was called into the ministry, a power that is not fearful of what man can do knowing that God's will rules over all, but at the same time expresses love for all, even for those who persecute the Church. And the Spirit grants His servants self-control so that we do not fight back but seek always in winsomeness to share the truth that Paul proclaims. He exhorts Timothy to stand by that truth so that his proclamation is free from sin and error and is a tool worthy of the Spirit's work to call others to faith and build up the believers in faith. Paul encourages Timothy to remain firm in his own personal faith and knowledge of the true doctrine Paul taught. In doing so Paul is passing the torch to Timothy in faith that Christ will keep His mission to reach the lost alive even after Paul is gone. Paul's ministry was not for nothing.

Focus Statement:

Like Timothy we were called to faith by Christ who had plans for us even before we were born. He called us into His Church by the Gospel to be a part of His mission to be the means by which His Spirit works faith in the hearts of those around us. The same faith that saved us works to keep us in the true faith by guarding it through Word and Sacrament. We hold to Christ by faith as our rock and fortress in the midst of the shifting sands of cultural beliefs.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

The pressure we face from the unbelieving world can cause us to be ashamed of our faith and seek to downplay certain aspects in order to accommodate what culture calls acceptable. We feel that we don't have the right to challenge the truth of another since society says all truths are acceptable

What the hearer should do as a result:

Hold fast by faith to the doctrine taught in Scripture as outlined in the Small Catechism as we stand against the political correctness of the culture we live in. We stand in the power given by the Spirit, and the love for others given by the Spirit, with the self-control that the Spirit desires we use to refrain from attacking even as we are attacked by the world.

Subject Sentence: Don't be ashamed-stand firm in the Gospel

As I read through and studied our Epistle Lesson, I began to think back to when Jesus called me back to faith and back into His Church. I had been knocked upside the head by the Gospel Message, hearing about Jesus love for me in a way that I had never heard it before. And it made a difference in my life. I gradually began to feel that I was being directed by God toward professional church work of some kind. The problem was I didn't know exactly what I should or could do. It was like I was on fire with the Gospel Message but wasn't sure where to direct the flames. At first, I was thinking of maybe becoming a teacher. But my education was sorely lacking. I had begun a bachelor's degree in engineering but had dropped out partway into it, realizing with the help of a professor at Oakland University that engineering was not what I was cut out to do. To pay the bills I began working at Hiller's Market as a stock clerk. My bosses evidentially appreciated my work ethic and petitioned the General Manager of the company to make me an Assistant Store Manager. I did that job for 27 years. They wanted me to assume the position of Head Store Manager, but I refused. Especially after the Lord had called me back to faith. I knew I could no longer perform the job as they expected me to. They expected me to manage my employees in an authoritarian way; a "It's my way or the highway" kind of attitude. They expected me to lie to my employees and customers as needed. When there was a problem employee, they would expect me to devise a plan or join in a concerted effort to make them quit. Or I was to write them up for infractions that were blown out of proportion so we had a paper trail that would support their eventual dismissal. My failure to comply with these things not only kept me from the Head Manager spot, it also kept me from the favor of many of my superiors. And I began to wonder just why God had put me on this earth, why He had called me back to faith, and what He wanted me to do with this wonderful gift that Jesus had given me through the Gospel Message, on that had forever changed my heart and life.

It was around this time that my Pastor gave me a brochure describing the Michigan District's Deacon Training Program. As I began to read what it was about, I became more and more excited. Here was an opportunity for me to learn how to be more involved in Church work without giving up my job and the insurance it provided for me and my family. It took me 4 years plus to complete the program, attending seminars on Saturdays. This meant that I had to use up all my personal days, some vacation days, and switch days off,

since Saturdays were one of the busiest days in the grocery business and you couldn't take them off without paying the price. Needless to say taking all these Saturdays off did not garner me favor with my fellow managers or my superiors.

But upon completing the Deacon Training Program I became a licensed lay deacon of the Michigan District. I was licensed to perform Word and Sacrament Ministry at my home church exclusively under the watchful eyes and administration of my pastor. And I found that such ministry was a joy. I enjoyed writing and preaching sermons and leading worship. And the members of my home congregation began to tell me, as did my Pastor, that I should consider getting into this full-time by going to Seminary.

But it wasn't all rosy and positive. When I would be leading worship or preaching, and either my pastor or another retired pastor was in the congregation, I would be very nervous-afraid that I would say something or do something wrong, even though my sermons were read and approved by my pastor. I would see members of the congregation talking or getting up and walking out and I would worry that I had either bored them or offended them. And I learned not to share my experiences as a Deacon with anyone at work as it would make me the butt of many a joke, both to my face and behind my back. But there was another member at my home church who went through the same training with me and had also become a Deacon. He was a brother I could share with and confide. Together we helped each other through the rough times, the fears, the feelings of shame when those we worked with in our day jobs talked about us. So when it came time to go to Seminary one of the hardest things for me was having this trusted fellow Deacon try to talk me out of going. He had been assigned to fill in at a small congregation who lost their pastor and could not afford to call another one. In his opinion I already knew all I needed to. Why waste all that money and that time going to Seminary? I struggled with that for quite a while.

Now I realize that much of this story doesn't really seem to apply to you. Just as when you read Paul's letter to Timothy you may not immediately see application there. Timothy is a professional church worker. He was elevated to the position of what we would call a District Vice President in charge of the Asia Minor Region of the Church. But in that position Timothy was not to act as the sole proclaimer of the Gospel Message. Besides those men

who had been called to be pastors of churches in the cities of that region, the laity had been called to serve the LORD too, doing the mission work of the Church, being Christ's arms and feet in reaching out to the unbelieving world around them with the Gospel. Paul's words of encouragement were for them too, just as they are for you and I today.

Just as Paul commends the faith that Timothy received from his mother and grandmother's witness to him as he grew up (**2 Timothy 1:5** *I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.*) so we too are commending a group that encourages and exhibits faith in mission among us. The Lutheran Women's Missionary League (the LWML) is involved in a variety of ways at Lamb of God to further the work of Christ's Kingdom among us. They have helped support Seminary Students, organized fundraisers to support mission work, been involved with donating items for a room at Carriage Town Ministries for women and children who are homeless, and many members are involved with our support of Franklin Mission.

Now I realize that by dedicating a Sunday to recognize this group and their work it can make some of us uncomfortable. Especially for those of us who struggle to give our time and talents to mission work. Those who feel that they have nothing positive to offer. Those who are uncomfortable with encountering the lost as the Church, uncomfortable when a chance presents itself to witness your faith in word and action. But rather than see these ladies as a source of conviction and condemnation, what if we saw them as a source of encouragement? As Paul says in **2 Timothy 1:6-7** **“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”** We can see them as a means of encouragement to fan into flame our own gift from God which is our faith created by the Gospel. As they are already involved in the work of the Church, we can join in with them, not having to create or organize something on our own. We can just join in with where the Lord is already working in and through them. We can join in with them as sisters in the Lord who share the same spirit: that spirit of power, love and self-control.

It's a spirit that was created in me when Jesus came back into my life by faith. It's the spirit that is active in you as one called into Jesus kingdom by faith. It is a spirit of power. The same power that sent the God the Son down to earth to become the Son of Man. The power that enabled Him to live a life in mission for the sick, the homeless, the dead and dying, and the hungry, and for all captured and bound in the devil's kingdom. It is the power that only God in human flesh could have, the power to become the sacrifice for your sin and my sin. The power to take upon himself all our reluctance to be the Church in mission, all our sinful fears that prevent us from reaching out to the lost, all our selfish desires that prevent us from sharing our time, talents, and treasures to help with the work of the Lord. He died for every single one of them. These sins no longer have the power to condemn you. Satan no longer has the power to condemn you. You are forgiven! You are freed to give mission work a try.

And what is behind that power? Love! A love that Christ had for you when you did not love Him or care for Him. I love that He has for you when you desire to please yourself at His expense. A love that works in your life to call out your sin so that in repentance you will turn back to Him through the faith that He gives in the Gospel. A faith that gives His special kind of love to you, poured into your heart in Baptism. A love that moves you to do acts of love and kindness for your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ as well as the lost. A love that at the same time works to establish self-control in you. When the world and your neighbors talk down about you, your witness of faith, your works of faith, that self-control keeps us from lashing out in anger but instead moves us to pray for them.

Paul wrote to Timothy knowing that just as he was suffering from persecution directed at him as a Christian, so too would persecution come to Timothy. In fact when we hold fast to Jesus, His teaching about what sin is as, and His being the only name under heaven by which mankind must be saved, we too are bound to suffer persecution. The world will claim we are bigoted and without feeling for those who choose lifestyles different from our own. The world will demand we tolerate all lifestyle choice and religions. By holding fast to Christ alone they say we are showing we deserve to be persecuted as enemies of what society deems as politically correct. Paul has wise words for Timothy and for us in **2**

Timothy 1:8-10 ⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,”

We should not let the world shame us for holding fast to the testimony of Jesus. We should not be surprised when difficulties, misunderstandings, and even persecution happens as we try to do the work of the Church in the world. We remember how Christ suffered too. But through His suffering we have been saved out of the devil’s kingdom into His kingdom—the Church. He did this not because He knew that you, or even these ladies who make-up the LWML could ever earn His favor through the works of our hands. They can’t and you can’t. But that’s OK. Christ earned eternal favor for you with the works of His hands and gives you the credit through His gift of grace. He has given you the gifts and talents that you have, just as He gave to me, and to Paul and Timothy, so that each one of us and all of us can contribute to the mission work of the Church as He planned for you to do even before you were born. We are brought together here to share in the work and to share our faith, encouraging one another, being voices of the Gospel speaking hope and love into each other’s ears whenever the world or our sinful hearts try to bring us to shame. A hope and love that has been made manifest to us in Jesus life, death and resurrection for you, for your fellow Christian, and even for the lost.

Paul wrote to Timothy saying that Jesus’ life, death and resurrection is a wonderful gift (2 **Timothy 1:12-14**) ¹² **which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.** ¹³ **Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.** ¹⁴ **By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.”** The Holy Spirit given at Baptism works to guard this gift of faith. He encourages us in the face of the false teaching that surrounds us in the world and even within those churches who call themselves Christian to hold fast to the sound words we have written for us in Scripture and the

doctrinal truths that they proclaim as gathered for us in the Lutheran Confessions. By ourselves we wouldn't stand a chance against the forces of evil that plot against us. But the indwelling Spirit uses God's Word preached and read here, as well as the testimony to it that we provide for each other, to guard that most precious deposit which is our faith in Christ and His promises.

Our works could never earn us favor with God, whether they are works done on our own or in conjunction with a group such as the LWML. As Jesus says in our Gospel Lesson Luke 17:10 **"¹⁰So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty'"** We do the work of building each other up and reaching out to the lose as the duty we have as members of Christ's kingdom. But when we do this work hand in hand with our fellow Christians, we are more effective than alone. The gifts that Christ has given us work with the gifts He has given our brothers and sisters. And they work to encourage us as we work to encourage them. Perhaps you aren't sure what your gift is, what Christ has for you to do as a member of His Body, His kingdom, His Church? Jump in and become involved in the ministry that is already happening, partnering with the LWML, working at Franklin Mission, helping out with the yard crew, or on the Church Council. Rather than let embarrassment and shame hold you back, fan the flame that is the gift of God that comes from faith in Christ. He provides the will and the power through Gospel. And His Spirit, through your involvement in His Word and ministry, will work to guard that deposit of faith unto life everlasting. Amen

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