

Written Copy: Sound Teaching for Itching Ears 2 Timothy 4:1-4

Proper 24-19th Sunday @ Pentecost

Sunday, October 20th, 2019

Text: 2 Timothy 4:1-4

¹ I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Exegetical Statement

Paul, knowing that his time on the earth is short, writes to Timothy to prepare him for the seasons of oppression that will attack the Church from without and within. People will love themselves and things of this world more than God and so will refuse to live according to His word and command. They will go after the vulnerable and appeal to the desire to continue in sin in the name of forgiveness rather than repent and turn away from sin and turn toward a life lived for Jesus. They will seem to be Christians and will profess Scriptural knowledge, but that knowledge stops short of the heart where it desires to change the way they think and act. Timothy is to remember what he learned from Paul, seen confirmed in the Scriptures and true doctrine and has seen make a difference in the lives of many bring them to faith and keeping them in faith. Paul prophetically warns that imposters will claim to be miracle workers and will advance through the Church leading people astray. But Timothy must stand by what he knows to be the truth and use the Scriptures to teach, admonish, convict, and restore those wandering into myths to the one true faith. Timothy himself needs to remain equipped to serve as God's man for the believers and to call out the lost. Paul warns that there will come a time when people will have no place for the correct doctrine of Scripture but will shop around for a preacher who allows them to continue pleasing themselves at the expense of living for God and in doing so fall away from the truth and from faith. But Timothy must remain vigilant holding fast to what is true so he may continue the missionary work to the Gentiles.

Focus Statement:

The Lord has given us Holy Scripture as the rule and norm for what is truth and what God desires of us. He gives us the Law in love so that we might repent of our sin and turn back to Him in faith. He sent us His Son to forgive us for turning away from His truth and to turn us back to Him in faith. He sends His Spirit so that we would hold fast to what He has breathed out in Scripture as the truth that stands today and forever.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

The pressures of society and even our own family can cause us to set aside the hard truths of Scripture and ignore them in favor of an "all is forgiven" response or seek preachers and teachers that tell us that the potentially convicting Law statements are not mandatory for us; such as those Churches that do not consider homosexuality and cohabitation a sin because Jesus is all about love. In a similar vein correct doctrine is ignored by dismissing the existence of the 3rd use of the law.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Make use of not only Scripture but the time-tested Lutheran Confessions that help us understand the Biblical Doctrines spread throughout Scripture. These keep us from being led astray by the world, the devil and our own sinful hearts working through the Church in error.

Subject Sentence: Itching Ears Need Correct Doctrine for Salvation

Paul wrote to Timothy almost 2,000 years ago: **2 Timothy 4:3-4** ³ **For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.**” Paul prophetically describes a problem that has existed and will continue to do so throughout the age of the Church; this time that we are now in between Christ’s ascension and His resurrection. That people will not have the patience or the acceptance of those things that Scripture says are unacceptable to God especially if it means we can’t do what makes us happy. The world wants a religion and a Jesus that forgives so that it can continue to please itself. And just as in the political arena it is more than happy or spin the truth to fit its own needs, to adjust and change it so that it pleases the ears and placates our sinful hearts. What the Church has held as Scriptural doctrine is out of date and needs to change. And if we feed those itching ears, we will have more bodies in the pews and more offerings in the plates

One of the biggest doctrinal issues today can be seen in the largest Lutheran denomination: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (or the ELCA). They have declared that since all sin is forgiven there is no problem with accepting membership of those who live in Cohabitation or a Same-Sex relationship. There is no problem with those who want to change their gender from that which God created them to have. In fact this is so not a problem those who are living these lifestyles can even be Pastors and leaders in the Church.

As far as Homosexuality goes, they say that the prohibitions against it in Scripture are a carry over of the culture of that time. When Paul writes in **Romans 1:26-28** ²⁶ **For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. ²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.**” Itching ear preachers say Paul is just voicing the values of his day, not any mandate from God on how believers should live. But in Roman Culture homosexuality and was known and was practiced as a

part of the worship of certain gods as well as by Roman Soldiers when they were away from their wives or suitable mates. In fact Paul points out that this is a sin because it was so prevalent at the time.

When Moses was giving the Laws to the people of Israel as God was forming them into a nation, he said in **Leviticus 18:22** **"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination."** But itching ears don't want to hear that. They argue that the prohibition against this was to demonstrate how Israel was ritually pure and set apart from its Canaanite neighbors who did such things.

Itching ears argue that when Jesus came, He changed the focus from ritual purity to a purity of the heart: as long as two people are in love and in a committed relationship it's OK with Jesus. But it was Jesus Himself who verified that basic building block for society when He said in **Mark 10:6-9** **"⁶But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, ⁸and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."** From Creation society was to revolve around male and female becoming one, not male and male or female and female joining together. That is an abomination-the opposite of God's design for mankind and His will and plan for the Church which is supposed to live in obedience to Him.

Jesus also is testifying to God's purposeful design for men and women to be one sex or the other. He created Adam as a male and Eve as a female. Now because of sin we say we are fallen from perfection, that's due to the sin we inherited and the sin we continue to commit. But God does not make mistakes. If He continues to bring the breath of life to babies of whom some are born male and some are born female, then who are we to change that. IS not changing the sex one was born into saying that God made a mistake with me, or that I know better about what works in my life than the Creator who knew me before I was born?

In that same Scripture passage cited by Jesus we see God's condemnation of cohabitation, even when it's between two members of the opposite sex. It is a union that is entered into without the blessing to the Lord that is declared in Holy Matrimony. Studies done on

cohabitation since the 1960's have found a lack of faithfulness among cohabitating couples that can follow them into marriage. Many today live together without family and friends knowing. They can separate and move on without anyone being the wiser. This promotes not faithfulness but infidelity. The gift of the sexual union was given to husband and wife for the purpose of the two becoming one in a physical manner that reflects the emotional and spiritual reality of marriage. And for God's purpose of procreation, to fill the earth. Using this gift for any other purpose is a sin. **1 Corinthians 6:15-20** ¹⁵ **Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!** ¹⁶ **Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh."**

Homosexuality, Cohabitation, and Transgenderism are sins. But so are many of the things I find myself doing throughout my day. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:21-22** ²¹ **"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'** ²² **But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell."** When I was on the phone with Comcast Friday wasting hours of my day trying to get our internet to work I sinned in my heart and even by what I said and how I said it. **James 3:8-10** says ⁸ **but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.** ⁹ **With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.** ¹⁰ **From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so."** And we have a habit of not speaking evil directly to the person we are discussing but instead gossiping behind their backs.

God tells us in **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** ⁹ **Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom**

of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

God gave us His Law that tells us how to live and how not to live not to ruin our day. He shows us our sin so that He can show us our Savior. So that we might know that even though we sin daily and repetitively Jesus came to earth to pay the price for all of them. The wages of each and every sin is death. But rather than you and I having to forfeit our life Jesus gave His life in His once and for all Sacrifice on the cross. His suffering and death converts each and every sin you commit knowingly and unknowingly. **Isaiah 53:5-6 “⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned---every one---to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”** All of what we have done that offends God has been laid on Him and He has taken it away. Instead of God’s wrath we have peace with the Father through our faith in the Son and His free gift of grace which we hold to by faith. And just as Jesus rose from death, never to die again we too will rise again to eternal life on the Last Day.

Well, since all sin is forgiven, I can leave here today and engage in my favorite sinful pursuit knowing Jesus has me covered, right? Wrong! Jesus desire for me as God’s precious child is that I would daily examine my life and repent of my sins. Repenting means that I not only am sorry for the things I have done that offend God as well as the things I should’ve done but did not do, but that I would turn away from doing them. As the result of the new heart and life I am given in Christ, and the faith by which I cling to Him as my Lord and Savior, I would turn toward Him. That I would turn to Him and live in obedience to His will and commands as stated in Scripture. That I would say: “I no longer want to have these sinful thoughts, words, and actions. Holy Spirit, work change in my heart and life so that I may be an obedient child.” That’s repentance. That’s how the Spirit works to keep us in faith even though we continue to sin.

How are we to stand up to the itching ears around us? **2 Timothy 3:16-17 “¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for**

correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." We have Scripture to guide us. And to help us make the most of what Scripture would teach us we have the tools that are **Luther's Small Catechism** and **The Book of Concord**. They have gathered the various teachings and doctrines taught in Scripture into a systematic and organized presentation. If we want to know what Scripture says about cohabitation or homosexuality, we can look in the Index of Topics and be directed to the Bible passages that speak on these things. These are wonderful gifts that help both you and I be competent and equipped to speak in faith and truth to the world around us

Paul warned in **2 Timothy 4:3-4** ³ **For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.**" But with the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions to guide us we have the answer to prevent us from wandering off into myths and walking away from our faith.

Each one of us is prone to itching ears, to seeing Jesus the forgiveness Jesus earned as our means to continue to live to please ourselves. Jesus came to earth and died on the cross not so we might remain in sin, but that our bondage to sin might be broken, so we could live in the newness of life that is His gift in Baptism. How do we defend ourselves against itching ears? (**2 Timothy 4:2**) **"preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching"** We hold fast to the truth of Scripture that shows us our sin then shows us our Savior. God's Word that moves us from a life that would end in eternal death to one that instead will end in eternal life. This Word not only reproves, rebukes, and exhorts us to a life of loving obedience to Christ, by the faith given in the Gospel message it gives us the power to live that out. May that faith guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen