

Written Copy: No One Can Bind the Gospel-2 Timothy 2:3-10

Proper 23-18th Sunday @ Pentecost

Sunday October 13th, 2019

Text: 2 Timothy 2:3-10

³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. ⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Exegetical Statement

Even though his master and friend Paul has been imprisoned and facing death Timothy is to take heart and continue steadfast through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit engaging in the work of the Church. Instead of being dissuaded by how things appear to be in the world-that the Church is losing the battle, he is to be empowered by the very Gospel victory that he is given to preach. He is to hold fast to the apostolic witness that he learned from Paul and saw change the hearts and lives of many. Paul can be imprisoned and even put to death, but the Gospel cannot be imprisoned or the work of the Holy Spirit through it stopped. So Timothy, just like Paul, should take heart that whatever the Church suffers in persecution is never in vain. Remain focused on Jesus death and resurrection victory and the salvation that it gives to all who believe. Christ will hold fast to His promise that all who remain faithful to His Word will live with Him forever, but those who give up faith after allowing themselves to be drawn away by the world will suffer apart from Him forever.

Focus Statement:

The devil working through the forces of opposition in the world has been trying to silence the Church since the time of Paul's execution and has not been successful. The truth of Scripture and the Gospel Message empowered by the Spirit is kept alive by Him. It continues to call people to faith and keep people in faith. And the Church will continue to be His means of proclaiming it until Christ returns again.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Our focus can slip from doing the work of the Church to being consumed with the evil present around us. We can begin to feel hopeless, that we are not making a difference and that evil is winning. We can lose our faith in Christ's promises to us the Church

What the hearer should do as a result:

Don't allow the evil in the world and its apparent victory to turn our focus away from the work at hand as the Church. Just as Paul encourage Timothy so we are encouraged to continue proclaiming and holding fast to the Gospel as Christ's power or redeeming us and all of creation

Subject Sentence: No One Can Stop the Gospel or its proclamation

In our Epistle Lesson Paul is writing to Timothy from prison. He wants to encourage his protégé to take heart and remain steadfast in faith and mission even though his mentor and friend is preparing to face martyrdom. Because of this Timothy has many reasons to become afraid regarding his mission in the Church and to become disillusioned in the Gospel's power to change the world. The same forces that have arrested Paul and declared him a criminal worthy of death will come and attack the Church in Asia Minor where Timothy has been stationed. And even though this persecution may not have reached him yet, it is enough to see the Apostle who was instrumental in the creation and spread of the Church throughout the Roman Empire be so easily stopped in his ministry. It is enough to make Timothy wonder if all the work they have done as the Church will now be for naught.

As we look at the situation around us, we can find much to cause us to become disillusioned. There is certainly enough negativity and corruption going on in the political arena to bring us down. There is the continued problems going on outside of the Church of inequality, crime, drugs, hunger, children being abused and abandoned to the street and gangs, and the fear that our country becoming entangled in another war. As the Church we pray for God to intercede in these things and yet it seems that things continue to get worse.

If that is not enough there is the opposition that the Church faces from within. There are Churches who call themselves Lutheran who have compromised the truth of Scripture in the name of Christian love, proclaiming that since all sin is forgiven sinful lifestyles are no longer a big deal. All is forgiven and forgotten in the eyes of Jesus so that a repentant heart is not necessary. They teach that Jesus died so you could live a life that pleases yourself instead of being changed and renewed in spirit to follow after Jesus. Other denominations have gone so far as to say that Jesus is essentially not the only way to heaven, but what really matters is that you are faithful to the revelation that works for you. In essence you can believe and be saved by the God of your own creation and imagination.

If all that is not enough there is opposition and contention within our own Synod. Some of the greatest contention and division centers on things that Scripture does not speak on one way or another, but individuals make it a reason to condemn their fellow LCMS Lutherans. What I'm talking about is are those who feel that if a congregation is not worshipping using

the Divine Service as printed in the LSB, and singing the hymns as printed in the LSB, they are not in fact worshipping the Lord in manner worthy of Him. I first heard this when I visited the Fort Wayne Seminary; it was voiced by several prospective students and affirmed by the Seminary recruiter who was speaking to us. Now, don't get me wrong: worship should be Scriptural. We need to clearly hear what God is saying to us, hearing both Law and Gospel. And the best thing we can repeat back to Him is what He has first said to us. And that is the gift of the Divine Services as printed in our hymnal which is the basis for our service this day: all of it is drawn from God's Word. But at the same time we must realize that Jesus and the disciples didn't worship using the LSB, or the Blue Hymnal, or the Red Hymnal, or even the Lutheran Hymnal of 1941. They didn't use any of the hymns printed in those hymnals and they were not accompanied by an organ. All of these things are useful and salutary gifts that we can use in our worship, but none of them are mandated by God.

The example of the worship of the Early Church that we do have is found in **Acts 2:42-45** **“⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.”**

When the Early Church gathered together, they focused on the Apostle's teaching, which we have collected in the Holy Scriptures and which the liturgy for our worship is drawn from. They focused on what God's Word had to say to them through both the Law and the Gospel. They did so gathered together in fellowship so that together they might be built up in the faith and so build up one another. And the center point of that fellowship and building up in the faith was the “breaking of bread” that we call Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper. They heard God's word and responded back in prayer so that worship for them and for us is a dialog: God's speaks to us and we listen, then we respond back to Him with petitions, thanksgiving, and praise.

In the midst of all this opposition within and without we need to keep our focus where Paul directed Timothy to focus on the truth revealed in God's Word. **2 Timothy 2:1-2** ¹ **You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**" The place Timothy was to find the strength to carry on in the midst of opposition is the place God is directing us to look as well, the witness and teaching of Paul that is found in our New Testament which Paul drew from the Scripture he had available at that time, what we call the Old Testament, and the apostolic witness of what Jesus said and did that we have recorded in the Gospels. Paul encourages Timothy to remain focused on what he has heard and learned from Paul (**2 Timothy 2:7-8**)" ⁷ **Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. ⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel"** Think over and meditate what he had been taught.

And the most important thing to focus on is Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. That this Jesus is the fulfillment of all the prophetic promises of Scripture. As God promised from the beginning here in Jesus Christ we have the fulfillment of His promise to provide salvation for all mankind. Here in this man Jesus who was born a man-an offspring in the line of King David. And yet not just a man but the perfect God-Man as demonstrated in the authority found in His teaching and preaching and in the miracles He did. But the greatest testimony is found in His resurrection from the dead. Only God can raise a man from the dead and Jesus proved He is God in human form by rising of the 3rd day.

The answer for us when we become disillusioned is found in what the Gospel Message declares Christ's death and resurrection has done for us. It has made us right with God the Father. By taking all of our sin upon Himself and removing it from our permanent record Jesus has removed all that stands against us being called into the Father's kingdom, being accepted into the Father's family, and receiving the greatest gift of all-eternal life with Him lived out with each other-His Church. The Gospel declares that we do nothing to receive this gift, it has been purchased for us by the blood of Christ. It is given as His free gift to all who hear and believe through the faith given by this Gospel Message, whether declared by

a fellow believer and/or implanted in us in Baptism. This was the focus of the worship of the Early Church. This was to be the focus of Timothy as he faced the opposition of his day. And it must be our focus today as well.

Paul encourages Timothy to keep on keeping on despite what appeared to be overwhelming opposition against the Church. **2 Timothy 2:3-6** **³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops** ” We are not on our own but serve in the Church under the command of Jesus Himself who not only commands the faithful but is the Lord of Hosts, the Lord of Armies, who has the power of all heaven and earth at His disposal. And He tells us to expect suffering at the hands of the unbelieving world and the forces of evil that work even inside the Church to disrupt the mission. We are given the power to carry on through this suffering from the very crop that the Church produces, the Gospel Message. It is our source of strength and hope, especially when doubt sets in. When we allow ourselves to be entangled in the business of the world that can prevent us from being the Church; all the ways the opposition around us seems to be winning. But we are to carry on as a faithful soldier of Christ seeking to obey His commands. Seeking to serve by obeying His rules to love Him first and others second just as an Olympic Athlete must compete by following the rules of the event. And that very Gospel that we proclaim which has the power to change hearts and minds is the power for us to carry on against all opposition

But perhaps the most encouraging of words for us today as the Church is **2 Timothy 2:8-10** **⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.**” The Romans could bind and execute the Apostle Paul, but they could not bind and execute the Gospel Message he proclaimed. It had been entrusted to Timothy who had entrusted it to other faithful men. The Lord of the Church was at work and is still at work today for the

sake of the elect-for the sake of all He will call to faith through the preaching of the Gospel. So that all men might be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth Christ will protect His Church and support it's witness until the day He returns. What we do as the Church, even though at times may seem inconsequential or even ineffective is used by the Spirit to change hearts and lives as He works through that message that we live by and profess by our words and actions. We have Jesus promise on this

We should expect opposition to continue within and without. We should expect that the devil will continue to oppose us working through the opposition presented by the world and by those who call themselves the Church. We will have times when we doubt the difference we are making in the lives of others. There will be times when we might feel overwhelmed with where our world is headed. When we experience this kind of opposition we need to turn away from the message of the world, away from the doubts and worries of our heart, and turn to Christ's words and promises found in the Gospel Message. Through His life, death, and resurrection He has overcome all opposition. His victory stands against sin, death, and the devil. And we stand in faith on all He has promised us in His word. He is in charge of the battle plan. Let Him worry about where this world is headed. Let Him worry about where His Church is headed. Let us stand fast in the faith that He has given us. Let us stand fast in the promises of the Gospel. He will keep us steadfast in that same faith through the Gospel message He would have us proclaim. May that faith and that assurance of victory in Christ guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus now and until He returns. Amen.