

October 17, 2010
The Twenty-first Sunday After Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 (ESV)

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 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. 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. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Early in the last century, there was a small town that was to be relocated because a hydroelectric dam was to be built across their valley. Their town would be flooded and submerged. The utility company offered all the property owners a good price for their properties and most sold out willingly. Then a strange thing happened. Shortly after the buyout, the once quaint and well-kept little town fell into disrepair. Paint that was peeling wasn't re-painted, boards came loose and weren't reattached, and weeds grew in the parking lots and were just left there. This once beautiful little town began to look terrible. A local man summed up the feelings of the community to a news reporter, "Why keep the town up. It will all be gone tomorrow?"

Did you ever think about how easy it might be for Christians to develop an attitude like that? We know the end of the story. We live every day, or at least we should live every day, with the assurance that we are destined for heaven. Jesus has come. He has died for our sins. We have faith in our Savior. So what is there left to do? Why not just sit quietly and wait for the end?

The very fact that we know the end of the story is why we can't just wait around to go to be with Jesus or for Jesus to come back to us. In today's reading from Paul's second letter to Timothy, Paul is telling Timothy exactly that. Paul says that, because you know the truth about the future, you must do something about it. In other words, we should live today in light of tomorrow.

To help us do that, let's take a look at Paul's letter to Timothy, focusing on today because of tomorrow. Put yourself in Timothy's place. Imagine Paul is writing to you.

When Paul wrote this letter, he knew his life was near its end. He also knew that the world was going to get a lot worse. So Paul reminds you about the bumpy road that he has traveled. Listen, to the verses just prior to our assigned text for today. ¹⁰ *You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹ my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. ¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*”

It’s scary to think that the better your Christian walk, the more persecution you will face – but it’s a fact. The world doesn’t like our God and it doesn’t like His followers. That’s why it’s so important for every Christian to study his or her Bible. We must know about those who have gone before us, the persecutions they faced, and God’s deliverance.

God’s Word and the only truth that has been trusted for all time and has never been proven wrong. Paul encourages you to trust in what you know and believe. *“while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it”* (2 Timothy 3:13-14). You can find deceivers everywhere from the street corner to the local Christian bookstore. The only trustworthy and enduring truth is Scripture, and the Bible isn’t just a book like all the others. Paul tells you why you can trust the Bible. ¹⁶ *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,*” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

We have the very Word of God, straight from His mouth, shouldn't everyone? Because you know and trust the truth, Paul gives you your marching orders, saying: "*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.*"

(2 Timothy 4:1-2).

Paul literally commands you to preach the Word. Here, the word, preach, simply means to proclaim. But this is not a verse intended for just pastors and Bible teachers. This is a command for every believer. It is your duty to tell others the good news about Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, Paul tells you to be prepared to proclaim the Gospel both in season and out of season. That means we are to be proclaiming God's Word when it's convenient and when it isn't convenient. To say that another way, there are no acceptable excuses for not presenting the Good News about God's plan for our salvation to those in our lives.

Why is our proclamation so important? Again Paul, "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.*" *(2 Timothy 4:3-4).*

We are living in that time, and it's not the first time. Look around. Satanic worship, mysticism, humanism, secularism, cults, New Age, all these philosophies and more are claiming to have the truth.

Everyone from Hollywood actors to government agencies are trying to get our attention so they can tell us how to live. Where do they get their information? They either dream it themselves or they allow themselves to be led astray by other dreamers. From my first visit over two years ago, I heard accounts of how this congregation used to be at the center of this community; but now if you ask the clerk up at Allsup's where the Lutheran Church is; they probably can't tell you. Well why not? What happened? I also hear of how many things and activities that used to take place around the church, but now there are very few. Signup sheets remain blank due to the lack of volunteers. Again, what happened? Somebody ought to do something...

could that somebody be you? Who started all of those grand traditions? It was Christians just like you. Who used to set up, sign up and volunteer to do those events that brought in the community? It was Christians just like you. We can't wait around for someone else to pick up the slack because you are those someone's now.

Let's take this the next step up. When the baseball or football coach says that if your child wants to be on the team they have to play or practice rather than go to church, youth group or Bible study...is that fair? ... Somebody ought to do something. Well who gave the coaches that power? It was the parents who does not speak up.

If the School system says your child cannot carry a Bible to school to read or that they can't say a prayer before a test or wear a cross, or even a t-shirt with a cross; that's not fair. I know it's not happening here yet, but it is in the larger cities and it will be here before you know it. That's not fair! Somebody ought to speak up. Who is that somebody? Could it be you?

As a child of God, we are called to proclaim the Gospel to the nations. That includes our community; but if they don't even know where our church is, how can we expect them to find it their selves? We are also called to stand up for Jesus in our nation, not sitting idly by when our religious freedoms are trampled upon. Who is going to speak up?

If we as God's children sit back and wait for someone else to pick up the pieces while we watch from the sidelines; if we don't stand firm and present the truth of God's Word, who will? You might face some persecution but there is an important point, a scary point to remember; the truth about Jesus Christ is only one generation away from being forgotten.

The generation that fails to spread the Gospel to the next generation ushers in the end. It has happened in other times and other places, and it can happen here, too. But God, who is faithful and just, has always revived His Truth in the world, but how many are lost in the following generations? How many will be lost if judgment day comes before all of your children and grandchildren are grown? What about their children and grandchildren? Nothing can be worth the loss.

God, through Paul's words, is calling you to complete the course. From the end of our reading we are told, 2 Timothy 4:5-8 (ESV) *"⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."*

We should continue to live boldly for Christ no matter what the circumstances. We must not let the problems, trials, and tribulations of this life cause us to shrink back. Our lives on this earth our only temporary and this life is not the end of the story.

Because we know that we are saved children of God, we can pour out our lives in service to God and our neighbor.

Our certain hope in life everlasting will keep us from bailing out before the end. Because we know who waits at the end for us, we can keep our eyes on the finish line, not the race. The author of Hebrews encourages us to do just that. He writes: ²*looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*" (Hebrews 12:2).

Rather than being complacent and inactive today because we know tomorrow, we need to be excited, charged-up, and take advantage of every moment to move the kingdom of God forward. We need to live today in light of tomorrow. And how do we do that? We follow the faithful, trust the truth, share the Savior, and complete the course.

And when, not if, we fall down, we fail, we get right back up with the forgiveness of Christ. Our salvation, wrought by Christ is not dependant on our actions, but fully on His merits, His sacrifice, given freely to ALL who call upon His name. Carry on in the name of Jesus.

Praise God...we have the greatness of His Grace through the sacrifice of His Son. You are forgiven in the name of Christ Jesus.

Amen.

And in that forgiveness, you have the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.