

Sermon Proper 22 2019

October 6, 2019

2 Timothy 1:1-14

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

For the next three weeks, I'm going to do something I don't think I've done before. If you've noticed, sometimes the readings from the epistle lessons go through a book in order. In October, the readings will read through the second letter of Paul to Timothy, and I'm going to preach through that book. Now as I say that, I'm not going to preach through verse by verse. I've done that before, or close, for a passage, and I might do some of that, but I'm planning to focus more on the theme or theme from that passage and drawing it out. Before I do that, though, something that's important to point out is what this book is as a whole. First of all, as I hope you know, this is written by the Apostle Paul, the apostle called by Jesus being knocked to ground when on his way to persecute the church, with the Lord saying "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" So this is that Paul—who became a great missionary, a great **“preacher and apostle and teacher”** of the Lord, like he says in our reading—Paul writing to Timothy a pastor he had ordained into the ministry to serve the Church.

You see that's what Paul is talking about when he speaks about fanning into flame the gift of God which is in Timothy, **“through the laying on of hands.”** I think this is important to point out for multiple reasons. First, this is a pastor talking to a pastor. I'll focus more on that next week, but we need to understand that for interpreting this letter. Second is to understand this fanning into flame. We're often drawn to seeing this as emotional fervor, but it's not. From what I understand it's connecting to the temple and the burnt offerings on the altar there. The fire there, fire continuous from when God started it, had to be tended and fanned into flame every morning. So how is this gift then fanned for Timothy? In the Word. The Spirit in that word. That's the second thing: to give context to this verse. And the third is to make the point that this is talking about ordination. What's happened in Timothy's ordination? He was given a gift, the gift of the Spirit. But the Spirit given there is given for giving. The Spirit given to the office for the giving to the people through Timothy's work, through His preaching.

Now although Paul makes this point about Timothy receiving this Spirit, it's not as though only pastors have it. That's what I mean with this being given to give. When Timothy's people heard the Word and believed, that Spirit was in them too. The gifts mentioned, not of fear, but of power, love, and self-control, those are given in that Spirit to the lay Christians too. And they're given to you.

As I say that, I want to focus on one of those gifts in particular. That's this word translated self-control. Now as I preach this, I have acknowledge that this was inspired by John Kleinig who those of you in our Hebrews Bible Class know wrote the commentary I'm using there. But this was from a presentation that he gave a few weeks ago that I was able to attend, so this is from him and not original from me.

To start with this, Dr. Kleinig made the point that this translation of self-control is actually misleading. He said that sounds moralistic, ethical. It should be translated sound-mindedness. In other words, the Spirit gives this sound-mindedness. What does that mean? Well it means that Spirit gives us a mind grounded in understand of our relationship to God. What we deserve from Him, but what He has given to us. So what does that mean? What do we deserve? What has He given to us? How has He given it to us? Well start with what Paul says in the later part of the passage: **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, 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, 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.**

So what does this sound-mindedness mean? It means that everything is grounded in that. Everything in our lives is grounded in the understanding that we deserve nothing but punishment, but that God has taken that and placed it onto Jesus for you. And that He then gives you the benefit of that through the Word, through the Word preached to you, the Word attached to the Waters of baptism. Through the Word attached to the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. This means you want to be there where Jesus works. That's this sound-mindedness. You want to be where Jesus is, where He promises to be. That's what undergirds our liturgy: Here He is, be with Him! But I'll talk about that again in our Narrative Service next month.

This also gives us perspective on how we deal with the world as the Church – we have to operate in the world understanding who we are and whose we are. For example we sometimes are worried about not speaking up because we might make someone feel bad. Specifically, someone asked in the class that I'm teaching about confessing the faith and that could make someone feel bad. What's the response? Did your parents ever say something that made you feel bad? Why? Sometimes we have to acknowledge our parents' as sinners, that's true. But generally why? Because we had done something wrong and they were correcting us. Why correct us? Love. We've bought into ideas of world about love and about not hurting people. We'll be offensive sometimes. It will just

happen. Jesus was offensive; offensive to the point that they crucified Him. I'm not saying be a jerk. Go out of your way not to be a jerk. But confess. Confess because you know that even if you lose that friend because of what you said, God is able to work in that confession. We keep worrying about what the world thinks, and forget that God doesn't think like the world. And yet He can still take care of it. Know that you are His and that God is able to keep you and care for you should you fall into the pits of persecution. **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.** That gives us, understanding how to interact with the world; what this sound mindedness looks like there.

As I say this, though, it also gives us perspective in our personal lives. Dr. Kleinig focused on this part for the presentation we heard from him. In particular he focused on the idea of coping. He talked about how we have issues coping physically – doing what needs to be done just in terms of the tasks at hand. Then he talked about personal coping, in terms of our vocations, son or daughter, wife or husband, parent, worker, etc. And then he pointed out how all of this affects the mental aspect of this. He made a great point in this, that when the mind is healthy it is focused outside of itself.

Sin does the opposite, doesn't it? I've made that point before, but what do you see with Adam and Eve when they sin? What happens to their attitude? First, they run from God. That's what sin does, how it disturbs our sound-mindedness, it pushes us away from God. But what else? Think about it. Why did they run from God, do you remember? Because they realized they were naked. God had created them naked, He had made them in that state. It wasn't like He hadn't seen them. But now with sin, there was this understanding that this was an issue. Why? I think because now they were focused on themselves. Before they had been so focused outside of themselves, so focused on loving God and loving neighbor, that was all they saw in a way. But now sin had done what? Turned them in on themselves in their focus. And we see that manifest in the blame game that follows. Whose fault was the fall? According Adam anyone but His own. First it was God's fault because He made the woman. Then it was also the woman's fault because she gave him the fruit. And the woman? As far as she was concerned it was the serpent's fault. Do you see how this focus works? We turn in ourselves and need to justify ourselves. And the more we try to do that, the worse it gets. It's so freeing when you realize "I haven't done enough. I can't do enough." And then you look to Jesus. There He is on the cross for your sin. Here He is in the washing of your sin in my baptism. Here He is in this Word that you're absolved. Here He is in this bread and wine, His very body and blood present there for your forgiveness; for your cleansing; for the purification of your conscience so that you can have a sound mind.

It's there that we can interact with others properly. Or as Dr. Kleinig said it: "We won't judge others rightly if we don't judge ourselves rightly." What does that mean? It means when we interact with others, we'll allow ourselves to interact with them improperly if we don't view ourselves in the right light. So what's our view of ourselves? Well, we are broken and utterly sinful, but yet justified by God Himself.

I've talked about this a bit before, but to say it a bit differently, think about when you have conflict with another person, what do you often do? You often seek out your friends, and you tell them what happened. Why do you do this? Because it gives us rest to have people confirm our frustrations, doesn't it? Why do you think that is? Because God has made us to hear a voice that justifies us. God has written it in our hearts that we would hear a voice that gives us justification. Of course, He made us to hear His voice, but now that we're fallen, where do we turn? Wherever we can get it. Now, as I'm saying this, I'm not saying that it's not good for us to get support in a challenging time. I'm not saying it's not good for us to receive encouragement from others when our chips are down. But what I'm saying is that in the midst of that conflict we should always judge ourselves rightly. We should understand ourselves as those broken by sin, but justified by Jesus.

What's that do? It makes it not matter who's right. If we're right, we don't have to force that on the other person. God is the God who will bring justice and vindication to us. If they're right, we can easily acquiesce because our value doesn't come from rightness or vindication from man, but from God. And as I say that, think about what that means when you're hurt, when you're offended. Where is your comfort? In belittling someone else, not forgiving, not loving? This is the Gospel lesson, what Jesus says: "Forgive them!" How? Lord increase our faith. It's not enough. In fact a friend and I were talking and he made the point that measuring faith is a bit of a fool's errand. It's never enough, except for Jesus. Instead, where do we look? To Jesus, to our God.

Dr. Kleinig said this so well. He said, "God is the source of spiritual sanity." I had a professor who said it another way: "Jesus is the only one who's really been perfectly sane since the fall." How true, and how important for us to understand this sound-mindedness in our lives. That's at all of this. That's this sound-mindedness. We look at Jesus in all things. How do all things relate to Him? How does our position in all things relate to the fact that we are so broken and sinful, yet that is precisely the one for whom Jesus came: for sinners. Know that then. Have that sound mindedness. Not by your effort, but by the gift of the Spirit. **For God gave [you] a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.** The Spirit of Jesus crucified for your sin. Amen.