

Weekly Message from Pastor Pook for January 29, 2021

Good morning. Today is Friday, January 29th, 2021 and I'm reading today from the Treasury of Daily Prayer. We're going to read from 2nd Timothy chapter 1 and beginning with verse 1. It's Paul's greeting to Timothy who was a young man who was training to be a pastor by Paul and Paul sets him up and is writing these letters to Timothy to teach him how to remain firm in the faith and how to lead his people and to be gracious and loving towards them.

Before we get started with that, I just want to talk about a few things that are going on around the church. Of course, we have our regular worship services, our Divine Services at 8:00 and 10:30 on Sunday morning. We have our Bible studies now at 9:15 on Sunday morning and I would highly encourage you if you're going to come to church on Sunday morning to stick around for the Bible study. We're working on getting some fellowship things going as well, having some coffee and maybe cookies and other things like that.

We also have a new Time and Talents Sheet that we are passing out and I'd encourage every one of you to fill that out. We're really looking at how we can fulfill the needs of this church. Not the things that every church ought to have, but we just don't have the people for. But the things that we, as this congregation, actually need. And also in particular, I really want us to see and think about opportunities to reach out into our community. Simple things like going to visit somebody who's sick or injured or giving a meal to someone who has just gone through a difficult time and may need some help. Or maybe light yard work or light housework if they might happen to need it. Somehow to reach out and to show that we are a caring community and that we want to communicate that to the people around us.

I also want to let you know that Lent is coming up very soon, about three weeks or so. February 17th is Ash Wednesday and we will be having services at 5:00 and 7:00 on Ash Wednesday. And then every Wednesday following that we will have a 5:00 service until Holy Week and then on Holy Thursday and Good Friday we will also have two services, a 5:00 and a 7:00 service for those who want to come.

Also, if you have not joined me in one of my catechism classes, now is the time. During the season of Lent, we're going to have our catechism classes and we will meet together and we'll talk about the basics, the six chief parts of the catechism. This is a great refresher course for anybody and everybody. Also, it's a good introduction if you are looking to join the church and you're not quite sure what it means to be Lutheran, what's unique and distinct about the Lutheran church as opposed to any other denomination. This is a great place to find out. When I first got here 2 1/2 years ago, I started with a blitz of catechism classes and tried to get a vast majority of the congregation to attend one of the classes. And I think we're at about 80 to 85% of our congregation. But there's still new people that have come in since I offered those classes and others who have not been able to make it. So now is the time. Beginning Ash Wednesday we're going to have our catechism classes again immediately following the worship service, give or take a few minutes for me to get my robes off and get a drink of water. We will be having our catechism classes at that time. So, there'll be a sign-up sheet at the church or you can call the secretaries and ask them if you can come. So we really look forward to that. I always love these classes and I think everybody that comes and joins me will love them as well.

Other than that, we're just doing our very normal, regular activities, mainly Bible study and church and the Divine Service. Our ladies are still getting together to sew and also for LWML. And so there's some great opportunities for you to get back into the church. And as a reminder, church is probably one of the healthiest places to go to, not only for this spiritual wellbeing but also for the physical safety. Those machines that we have in the corner of the sanctuary and in the narthex and in the fellowship hall those clean out our air and the surfaces. And so 99.9% of everything that's in the air gets killed and on the surfaces gets killed by those machines. So it's a great place, it's a safe place. And not only will you be healthy, you'll be spiritually strengthened also. So please join us for one of our Bible studies or for the Divine Service.

Now 2nd Timothy, Chapter 1:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, ² To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. ⁴ As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. 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. ⁶ 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, ⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

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, ¹¹ for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, 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.

Now, this is Paul again writing to Timothy, a young pastor that he has sent out into a congregation to lead but much of what he has to say is for everyone as well. First the reminder that the faith passed on from his grandmother to his mother to him is a reminder for us to be faithful in praying for our children and our grandchildren and great-grandchildren and making sure that they have the Word of God in their hands and that they hear the Word of God to the best of our ability to share it with them. And so, it's important for us to pray on a daily basis for our children and grandchildren and others that we know that they might have faith and hold firm to the faith that was given to us and is given to them.

And we should fan into flame that gift of God and hold fast to the words that were given to us, that were entrusted to us and to believe as Paul does, "But I am not ashamed even though I suffer for the Gospel." So we may not really suffer for the Gospel yet but we have definitely been ridiculed for what we believe. We've been thought foolish and naive because we actually believe that God loves us and that Jesus Christ died to forgive our sins. We've also been called foolish when we say that all people are sinners. And we've been looked down upon because we're so judgmental. But the reality is no, we believe and are convinced that there's nothing good that comes except through Christ Jesus.

And so, we are convinced that God saved us and called us to a holy calling not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace. And He has a purpose and a grace for you and for me and we can be firm in that and confident because God through Jesus Christ abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. Think about that, death is abolished. Now you may look around and say, "Well Pastor, we've had several members of our congregation die in the last month. Well, how can you say that death is abolished?" Because that is but a sleep to those who call upon the name of the Lord. It is not a permanent situation. It is not even anything to be feared. It is something to be embraced.

I was talking with one of our members who recently lost their spouse and it was actually a year ago last week. And they said, "Well, they've got a year ahead of us already. So they've already been in paradise for one year

and they've got a headstart on the rest of us and they get a chance to see what we long to see." And I just love that attitude. That is what we're looking for, that is what we're striving for, that is what we're hoping for, that eternity with Christ. And what a glorious day will that be. And whether or not we end up suffering or being arrested for our faith or at the very least mocked and ridiculed, we do not need to be ashamed but hold our head high. Because I know whom I have believed and I am convinced. I love the certainty and the confidence and the boldness. You can just see Paul standing straight, firmly on both two feet and just proclaiming this with all the confidence that he has, "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." That Christ will be able to guard us, not that Paul will be able to stand firm, not that Paul has the strength in and of himself, but that Christ who has given us the faith will guard it and keep it to the last day. And that is where our faith is to be entrusted and grounded in Christ, not in our own strength, not in our own understanding, not in our own good works or how well the world perceives us but in Christ Jesus and him alone.

There's a lot of chaos in this world, I keep going back to that. I think every message for the last month or so I probably talked about the social unrest, and the medical unrest, the political unrest that is going on in our society and I think it will continue for quite a while. There is a deep division in our society and it's not just between Republicans and Democrats, or the left and the right, or the black or the white, it's really a divide between Christianity and everything else. And the world is getting more and more hostile to Christianity but we can stand firm because we are convinced in what we have believed and we are convinced that God will guard and keep us until the last day.

Now is the time to delve deeply into the Word. As we read in 2nd Peter on Transfiguration Sunday, last Sunday, that Peter on the mountaintop, literally having the quintessential mountain top experience, being on the top and seeing Christ and all of his glory he said, "Yes, I saw that and I am not making this up and this is not some cleverly devised myth but I have something even more sure," he says, "And that is the prophetic word of God." See even though Peter was on the mountain with God himself and saw the glory of God with his own eyes, he was more convinced that the prophetic word of God, the written word of God was more important than any vision that he had.

And so, we need to value and treasure the Word of God in the same way that Paul says because no prophecy came from the will of man but it came inspired by the Holy Spirit and men writing through that inspiration what God desired for us to hear and to know. We may not even understand everything about God. In fact, I can guarantee you we don't understand everything about God. But if he's truly a God and he's greater than us then I would hope I would not be able to understand him completely because then he would be a very small God but he is not.

He is the Almighty Creator of the universe and He has all things, and all things hold together by His power. And I want to know that God and the way that I know Him is not looking out into nature or trying to devise His will in the stars but to read His Word, to inwardly digest it and to grow daily in prayer and focus upon reading His Word. That is where we will find a surety. That is where we will have the firmness to stand on the rock which is "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," the rock of Christ who is our salvation, who is our security and who is where we find comfort and peace. Hold fast to His Word and gladly hear and learn it. That is what we are called to do. That is what we really need to do more than anything else in this trying time. That is what will bring us peace and confidence and hope. May that be with you always now and forever unto life everlasting. Amen.