

Conley Memorial Presbyterian Church, 24th Sunday after Pentecost, October 30th, 2016

Scripture: Not Just To Enjoy, But To Equip

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2 Timothy 3:14- 4:5

This first statement I will make, is not one that you could sugar coat and put in a candy bag for your next holiday party, nor does it make you want to jump for joy; this statement is actually rather downhearted. The statement is that we are often selfish, lazy people—it's in our nature! This isn't the most exciting thing to hear every day, however, it seems to be the elephant in the room that nobody likes to talk about; so we will go ahead talk about it right now in terms of our feelings towards sharing.

With Halloween tomorrow evening, many people expect to go from door to door “tricking” and “treating” and “asking for something good to eat”. Imagine you have just finished successfully gathering a bucket of “treats” and “good things to eat”, when someone asks you if they can have half of the “treats” and “good things to eat” that you have just received. Our first inclination would be very hesitant and unwilling to give up what we just received. This is our selfish nature coming to fruition. While we would be very hesitant to give people our “treats” and things that are “good to eat” in terms of Halloween candy, we are also often very hesitant to give people “something good to eat” in terms of our faith.

There are so many different doctrines and paths that people can take in terms of their faith as seen through today's culture, yet there is only one that will truly feed them so to speak. With so much false religion and enticing yet unfulfilling hopes out in the world today, as followers of Christ, we must be actively pursuing giving people what is true and actually filling. This is what Paul dedicated his life to, and is almost precisely what he is instructing Timothy to do in his letter that we know as the book of 2 Timothy.

2 Timothy is in some ways a parting letter that Paul is sending his final regards in. Paul is currently imprisoned and anticipating a relatively soon martyrdom. This letter

is his last words to his student he often referred to as his son, instructing him how to continue after he is gone. Paul writes to remind Timothy of the persecution and suffering that will be coming to him, and to not fear. He reminds him to teach the truth of scriptures in a place and time that is immensely filled with falsehood. Paul gives Timothy this final charge in chapter 4 starting in verse 2 going through verse 5:

“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:2-5, NIV).

As these verses so clearly show, the call to preach the word of God is not to be taken lightly! The Greek word that Paul used when describing this charge was one that denotes an oath that would be avenged if one were to break it—the highest form of a command. This charge is a serious matter! We as Christians living in 21st Century America, on October 30th, in this small white chapel, in the beautiful Western North Carolinian Mountains, have this same charge and call.

I believe it to be true, that all of us are not truly fulfilling the call that we as Christians have through what we have read in Scriptures. We often times seem to be selfish in our faith in terms of our unwillingness to share the scriptures with others. As Paul writes, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV). The original Greek word for “equip” denotes a particular task or job that would follow. This task that we are being “equipped” to do through scripture, is the work of patiently correcting false teachings and showing others the way of truth. Scripture is indeed in some ways meant for our personal spiritual lives and faith, yet the problem is that our faith is largely not a personal matter! We are called to be part of the body of Christ and are to live in that unity! We are to be using the scriptures not just to enjoy for ourselves, but also to equip us into doing the work that they are meant for!

We are to be spreading the word of God to our friends, neighbors, co-workers, and all those who follow after false hopes. All people are searching and longing for “something good to eat”. It is as if people are “trick or treating” in wandering door to door hoping they will be able to find something that will nourish and fulfill them, only to leave them unhappy and wanting more and more. As Christians, we are equipped with the only “food” so to speak that will fulfill their longing in this life and the next. Give them the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which as Paul writes in his letter to Timothy, is “able to make you wise for salvation” (2 Timothy 3:15, NIV). As you and I are equipped with the scriptures, let us go from this place fulfilling the work of our ministry in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Note: All Scripture references are from the New International Version of the Bible, 2011.