**Christ – Timothy’s Confession**

**All 3 Texts**

St. Timothy, Pastor & Confessor

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

What would you be willing to sacrifice to make the good and bold confession of Jesus Christ? What would you be willing to endure for the name of Christ? What is required of us in our confession of Christ?

Although not in the text, last week we were reminded that Christ said *“If any would come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me… And that those who would save their life, will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”* (Mt. 16:24-25)

What cross must you bear for the sake of the Gospel? What will you sacrifice to confess the truth in a world that is often hostile to your confession of Christ? What will you endure to confess that truth?

Timothy’s story is an interesting one in that regard. He was raised and taught the truth of God by his Christ believing Jewish mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois.

It is important for us to remember how the initial growth of The Church in those early years took place. Those first to have faith in Christ and confess Him as Lord and Savior were those who were expecting God’s Christ to come and were awaiting Him. From the first written Scripture, the books penned by Moses, and throughout all the prophets, God’s people were the people of Israel. We might call them Jews.

Peter’s first sermon, 50 days after Christ’s resurrection on Pentecost, was very simple. Peter takes those gathered, all who are Jews from many parts of the known world, and walks them through Moses and the prophets (the Old Testament). He shows how the Scriptures all pointed to God’s Christ. And then, almost like a mic drop, He declares to them, *“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”* (Acts 2:36)

Ouch!

Those gathered were cut to the heart! They wanted to know what they were to do.

Peter replied, *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”* (Acts 2:38-39) Three thousand souls were added that day through baptism.

One sermon catechetical instruction before being brought into membership? How?

Because this earliest evangelism was done by making a simple connection, if you would, like flipping a switch to connect a circuit – and the lights go on.

Jews went through extensive Catechesis in the Torah and Prophets, our Old Testament. They were waiting for the fulfillment of the prophecies pointing to God’s Anointed One, God’s Christ. Early evangelism simply completed the process. Flip the switch and the lights show God’s Christ – Jesus. Jesus is the fulfillment of all the Law and the Prophets.

This brings us to Timothy in text from Acts. It is about twenty some years after Peter’s first sermon. Were Eunice and Lois in Jerusalem for Peter’s Pentecost sermon? We do not know. Had Timothy even been born by then? Again, we know not. However, the switch had been thrown for them – they knew the Gospel –they had faith in Jesus. They trusted in Him as God’s Christ. Eunice and Lois raised Timothy in the Scriptures, they had taught him that Torah and the prophets pointed to God’s Christ, Jesus.

Timothy’s father however was a Greek. Timothy therefore had not received all the Jewish religious rites. Paul’s visit to Derby and Lystra in our first reading finds young Timothy spoken well of in the region in which he lives. Paul sees him having pastoral potential to bring the Gospel of Christ to others. So, he takes him along.

There is a slight hitch, Timothy’s history is known in the region. His father is a Greek – a Gentile – an outcast to Jews. People knew this. So, he needs to be prepared to do the work of evangelism to those who have already been catechized in Torah and the prophets.

As Paul went from town to town, to whom did he go first with the Gospel? He went to those who already had been catechized in the Jewish faith. He went to those who only needed to have the connection completed, the light switch thrown that shows – Jesus is the promised Christ. He spoke to the Jews. To speak among Jews and be a witness to this truth, outsiders were often not well received. To go to Jews, who knew Timothy’s heritage by his father, something needed to be done. Timothy needed to be Jewish – without any doubt.

Do you remember the questions I asked earlier? *What cross must you bear for the sake of the Gospel? What will you sacrifice to confess the truth in a world that is often hostile to your confession of Christ? What will you endure to confess that truth?*

As Timothy sets out with Paul, there is a serious challenge. What is he willing to sacrifice, what is he willing to endure to confess the truth of Christ before others? Timothy needed to be circumcised.

Paul had just come from the Council in Jerusalem with letters to Gentile believers and those of Abraham’s line as he brought them the Gospel. That letter instructed that there should be no unnecessary burdens laid on those Gentiles coming to faith in Christ. They were to avoid some things that were very obvious, things that especially had distinct connection to the worship of false gods. This included sexual immorality and eating of meat sacrificed to idols. AND the Jewish rite for circumcision was not a requirement for someone not of Abraham’s line.

But in order to be heard by the Jews, Timothy needed to appear a Jew.

Now let us look at the end of Timothy’s life. He became a pastor, serving in Ephesus. Paul wrote him two letters as he served as a young pastor, encouraging him to stay there even though it was a touchy situation. He encouraged him to boldness of faith, confessing and teaching the truth in Ephesus. They were dear friends, or so we believe, for tradition holds that Timothy came to visit Paul in Rome, even suggesting that he was present when Paul was beheaded.

How bold is your confession of the faith? We could ask those questions again. *What cross must you bear for the sake of the Gospel? What will you sacrifice to confess the truth in a world that is often hostile to your confession of Christ? What will you endure to confess that truth?*

Tradition says that Timothy, while in Ephesus serving as Bishop (a bishop would be like the senior pastor of a community), went out to stop a pagan procession to the goddess Diana. These processions often had vile practices going on. They often had explicitly immoral sexual acts being done, but they dressed in perverse costumes, and sometime even offered human sacrifice. Timothy tried to preach the Gospel and get them to stop their immorality.

Accounts differ slightly as to whether his words were, or were not exactly, “Men of Ephesus, do not be mad for idols, but acknowledge the one who truly is God.” All accounts agree that the mob of revelers attacked him and beat him so badly that he died of the wounds inflicted.

Timothy died as Paul had instructed. As we read earlier in his pastoral letter to him, Paul urged Timothy to “fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

He died in that manner. Confessing Christ before those who wanted nothing to do with Christ. He was preaching the Word of Christ, at a time and in a place it was not popular – out of season – rebuking and exhorting. Many were the ears who were itching to hear something different, but Timothy was faithful, and gave to their ears what they needed to hear.

It is not easy to be a Christian - much less a Christian pastor in the midst of a world that hates us. It is why we remember Timothy as a pastor and for his confession. He is for us a faithful witness of what Christ can accomplish in us and through us.

Timothy was no different than you or me, he was a sinner like us! Paul wrote him such letters because Timothy was struggling in heart and mind. He was wrestling with temptations. He may have been considering abandoning his post in Ephesus because of the surrounding paganism.

It was Christ who kept him faithful. For God is faithful and just. He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we were able to bear. Indeed, as Scripture declares He is the one who provides the strength we need to stand up under ALL temptations.

We do not gather here because we are perfect! We do not gather here to show off how much better we are than others!

We gather together so that we might be encouraged, strengthened, and built up together in Christ!

Here Christ comes to us! He feels our ears His word, strengthening us in heart and mind! Christ the very Word comes into us. The peace of God which surpasses all understanding enters to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Christ is the very food that we eat and drink, His body and blood given and shed for us for the forgiveness of sins.

Our timidity is forgiven as He strengthens us.

Our silence in the face of challenges is forgiven as He feeds us.

When such doubts assail us, and Satan's lies scream in our ears to almost overwhelming volumes, we need to close our eyes and declare boldly, “I am baptized!

I am in Christ!

He has claimed me!

He has made me his own!

He dwells within me and strengthens me! Thanks, be to God in Christ Jesus, my Lord!” Amen.