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Pentecost XVII & Proper 22  
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Text: II Timothy 1:1 – 14  
Title: That Kid!

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. His parents just didn't know what to do with him. Every day seemed to bring another headache from their teenage son, and it seemed like everything that they said caused an argument. There was just no peace in the house with the constant arguing.

Then there were his constant attempts to push the boundaries of what he could get away with. It seemed that his parents' rules just served as inspiration for new ways to get in trouble. For example, it was clear that girls weren't allowed in the house when they weren't home, and they were *never* supposed to be together in a bedroom. Sure enough, dad came home from work early one afternoon, and found a girl with him in his room. Yes, the door was open and his little brother was home, but that didn't mean that he wouldn't push things further the next time.

Then one day mom was cleaning up a mess that he had left behind, again. She was getting really tired of him being too lazy to walk dirty dishes to the kitchen sink like he was supposed to do. She went back to pick up his sweatshirt which she normally would have left sitting there for him to pick up later. But she had friends coming over and didn't want it sitting on the couch when they got there. When she picked it up something fell out of the pocket. She saw a plastic bag next to her feet, and then she saw the strange looking pills inside. Now what?

His parents weren't sure what to do with him. He was the second of three kids, and they couldn't help being concerned about him. He wasn't a bad kid, but what had them concerned was that he wasn't exactly what they considered a normal teenager. Their oldest son fit the

stereotype. Somewhat rebellious, stubborn, and a know-it-all kind of kid, and while he caused them all kinds of grief, he was what they expected a teenager to be. His younger brother wasn't.

Their primary concern was how shy he seemed to be. There weren't that many friends that he talked about when they could get him to talk at all. When he was home it was more likely that he'd be in his bedroom alone studying or watching TV. When he did join the rest of the family, he wasn't interested in what everyone else was watching. It was like he was there because he had to be. They weren't sure how to communicate with him. They just wanted to know if he was doing alright.

The other thing that they weren't sure how to handle was his unusual interest in church. It seemed a little too serious, at least as far as the rest of the family was concerned. Sure, mom and dad would go when they thought to get up on a Sunday morning, but he was actually getting up and going on his own. And not only was he going for worship, but he would stay around for the other stuff too, like youth group and bible study. To his parents that was so odd, and so it was one more way that they couldn't understand him.

Two different descriptions of two different teenage boys from two different families. They pretty much have nothing in common except for their ages and the fact that they both have concerned parents. One is pretty much the shy loner who seems to be trying to find himself in life, and the other appears to be on the wrong track in a life that won't amount to anything but heartache for his parents. There is nothing that appears to be similar about these two except for what they will become in their respective futures. Both will become pastors when they are adults even though they will each follow very different paths to get to that ultimate outcome.

There is no set path into the Office of the Holy Ministry. You can't predict that a certain type of man will end up being a pastor, and just because a man is a pastor doesn't mean that he

had a spotless life prior to going to the seminary for his education. One man might become a pastor as his first career, and another could decide to go to the seminary after several years in another field. But of all the differences that could exist in the past lives of two unique pastors, there is almost always one common factor, someone encouraged him to listen to the Holy Spirit's call into the Ministry. We find three such people in today's epistle reading from II Timothy, one of the three books in the New Testament that are called the Pastoral Epistles.

The first influence on Pastor Timothy is mentioned right away, St. Paul himself was an influence on him, and even calls him his beloved child, that is his child in the faith. This is the last letter of Paul that we have, and it contains several important points including an emphasis on faithfully teaching the Word of God in the face of false doctrines. The next two influences on Timothy are family. In verse 5, Paul describes the sincere faith that was first in the hands of his grandmother, Lois, and passed on to his mother, Eunice, to finally be passed on to Timothy at an early age. These two women faithfully carry out their vocation of passing on their faith to the child that is in their care, and their faithfulness is used by God to form one of His first pastors.

From the time of the Exodus, the Lord has given the faithful adults of Israel the responsibility of teaching the true faith to the next generation. Deuteronomy 6 is just one of the places that the Lord tells His people, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." This is a command that has been passed on to each generation, and it is still for us today. Each Christian adult is supposed to make sure that the children around them are taught about Jesus Christ and what a life of faith in

Him is supposed to be, and today it is a responsibility that is taken far too lightly at best or outright ignored at worst.

The evidence of this failure is all around us. Kids disappear from churches of all sizes at alarming rates as they follow the example set by the adults in their lives. The example of placing just about anything – from sleep to work to recreation to family – ahead of their relationship with their Lord. Why go to church when Sunday is the only morning to sleep in or when there's something more fun or more important to do? Many children who are baptized never see the inside of a church again until confirmation, and they typically have no idea what is even in the Bible when they begin those classes. Once they make it through confirmation, more than 50% of all newly confirmed teens are not likely to be seen in church again until sometime after college, usually when they want to get married. After the wedding, they're typically not seen again until they have children of their own, and then this bleak pattern begins all over again or it simply ends entirely because the new parents see no value in being part of a church, a common view among many young parents today.

Each generation gets farther and farther away from the faith of the previous one and you only need to look at the mess that our world is in to see where this lax attitude has gotten us. Our society drifts further away from having any sort of values or morals, and truth becomes more and more relative. People don't really care if what they're hearing in a church is the truth, they just care if it makes them feel good. Some churches try gimmicky music or programs to try and keep people interested instead of trusting in the power and promise of God's Word and Sacraments, as He calls us to do. Still other churches compromise their entire identity to try and look like the world around them, always trying to look new and exciting instead of solid and consistently faithful. In the face of such problems, it's hard to believe that there is any hope to be found.

But Paul tells Timothy in verse 7, "...God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord...but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God..." By sending us the Holy Spirit, God has given us all that we need to serve Him. He gave us His Spirit, and it isn't a Spirit that is timid or uncertain or fearful of the problems of this world. This is a Spirit of power, of love and of self-control. By living a perfect life for us already, Christ gives each of us the ability to do the work that He has called us to do. Regardless of whether we succeed or fail in the world's eyes, He promises us the reward of eternal life as we live out our lives of faith by serving one another, and we continue to serve Him by passing the faith to the next generation just as Lois and Eunice did for Timothy. It is the same Spirit of power through faith that has sustained His church for over 2000 years, and it will continue to sustain us still today as we pray for His strength, guidance and wisdom.

This is what the apostles are asking of Jesus in today's Gospel reading when they say, "Increase our faith!" They want to be taught the Word of God, and they want to be given the strength and wisdom necessary to serve Him. Their faith increased greatly throughout their remaining days, and the Lord continues to grant that request for each faithful generation that continues to ask of Him as we do today, "Lord, increase our faith!" Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.