

Pentecost 21  
October 9, 2016

Theme: Remember Jesus Christ!

One of the things that I'm often asked is: why do you make the kids memorize passage and the parts of the catechism in Confirmation Class? Some posit that I have nothing better to do with the time allotted for class than to spend 10 or 15 minutes listening to the kids recite. Others think that it's just a time worn tradition that Pastors can't escape even though it doesn't hold a lot of value today. But it's neither of those. The passages I ask the children to commit to memory are core passages that present the gospel and form the foundation of our faith and life. In short, they point to Jesus. They won't always have you or me with them, but those passages committed to memory can't be taken from them. In our lesson for today, St. Paul encourages us to **Remember Jesus Christ!**

Remember what he wrote in chapter 1 of this letter. **I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.** Timothy had this faith from little on. His mother and grandmother had passed it on to him. He knew Jesus much the same way that little Leroy Lauderdale was given faith in him through baptism last week. And Timothy grew in that faith and ultimately became a faithful pastor and co-worker with Paul. Was he now in danger of forgetting? Perhaps not.

But, Paul himself understood how important this is. He was in prison as he wrote this. Chained like a criminal in a dungeon. Alone. Cold. How easy it would be to lose your hope and to go insane. Put yourself in his shoes. What would you do? What hope would you have? Would you give up? Despair? And why was all this happening? For the gospel? If only you'd denounce Jesus you could seek your peaceful release and get on with life. Remembering Jesus Christ brought hardship and pain, but Paul could not and would not deny him. If all that he could do any more was write letters to churches and friends encouraging them, so be it.

To us too, though, Paul says, **Remember Jesus Christ.** And you say, that's why we're here. We memorized those passages that our pastor so regularly assigned. Of course we remember. Every part of worship points us to Jesus. That's why we operate a school in order to assist parents in training their children to see Jesus. Remembering Jesus is about more than simply the power of positive thoughts. It's more than Ten Steps to a Better Life or in the words of well-known author, Your Best Life Now. No, when Paul directs us to **Remember Jesus Christ**, he has something very specific in mind. He says, **Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David.** That is the summation of the Christian faith. Jesus Christ is the descendant of David who was long promised. Jesus Christ raised from the dead as the Son of God who took on flesh and lived a perfect life, not so that we could live perfectly here and now, we can't. His rising from the dead is the guarantee that God sees us clothed in his holiness and perfection and we live at peace with him for all eternity in heaven.

**Remember Jesus Christ**, for Paul says, **if we died with him**, and we have through baptism been connected with his death, **we will also live with him**, not only in this life but forever. And **if we endure we will reign with him.** Imagine that God should give you and I, sinners though we are in this life, the privilege of reigning in the life that is to come. He said through John in Revelation, **To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.** (*Revelation 3:21*)

Yet we still wait that time and in the meantime we see the struggle and tend toward lukewarm as did those Christians in Laodicea all too often. We are encouraged toward that by a world that is more and more evil, fulfilling the prophecies of Jesus growing cold, (*Matthew 24:12*) and more openly opposed to God and his Word. But we have already spoken of the challenges Paul faced as he was chained for the gospel. As we look toward that peaceful picture he paints of heaven, we see similar challenges to our faith. A recent study by the American Bible Society and Barna Group found that **70% of Americans believe in there is one God who is Triune, a number nearly matched by those who believe that God accepts the worship of all other religions.** It also found that **60% believe that God, who cannot err is the author of the Bible, but less than 1/2 believe that everything the Bible says is true.** That same survey also found that **70% of Evangelicals believe that Jesus is a created being.**

And a higher percentage of Evangelicals than Americans in general claim heaven is a place where all people will ultimately be reunited with loved ones. (<http://cnsnews.com/commentary/eric-metaxas/americans-evangelicals-misunderstand-basic-christian-doctrines-fail-theology>)

It's no wonder then, that with that much diversity and unclearness, that we sometimes feel hopeless, overwhelmed, like we're losing. But Paul says, **God's Word is not chained.** Though he himself was chained for holding to it, God's Word remains at work and powerful which is why again he reminds Timothy to **Remember Jesus Christ.** From cover to cover, God's unchained, omnipotent Word points to Jesus. When we worry about the general course of our country, we need more Jesus, who stared down Pharisees and teachers of the law, and shared unabashedly the truth of his Word so that, Joseph and Nicodemus, two of perhaps the most unlikely people of his time might serve as caretakers of his body and bury him. When we wonder about the abject disrespect that God's authority seems to have, we see its power to make even men like Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar take notice. When we worry that maybe we've sinned in such a way that God won't or can't forgive us, he points us to the picture of his Son hanging on the cross and see the power of his word and the faithfulness of his promises.

God's Word is not chained. It smites the conscience of sinners like us with its law and comforts our souls with the balm of his gospel. It tears down and builds back up. If we want to know the solutions to the problems of this life, we'd do well to listen to less Hannity, Wolf and Rush or Trump, Obama and Clinton, and **Remember Jesus Christ.** Brush a few decades of dust off your Catechism and recommit to memory its 6 chief parts. To refresh those passages you learned as a little kid where God said, **I, even I, am the Lord and apart from me there is no Savior. (Isaiah 43:11)** Or from that same 43<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Isaiah, **Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. (Isaiah 43:1)**

God's powerful Word is unchained. He is faithful, even when we are faithless, because to be otherwise, would be to disown himself. His promises stand firm and his Word abides forever. Join with Paul in marveling at God's faithfulness and thanking him for his goodness. Join in unleashing the power of that word through a life lived in steadfast faith that reflects all of God's mercy and goodness even in times of strife, sadness and uncertainty. There is one constant in this world and God's love revealed in the person of **Jesus Christ, raised from the dead.** In him all the promises of God stand fulfilled. Join with Paul in proclaiming that message as you live your life everyday, as we work together here, and as we support the gospel cause around the world.