

Rekindle the Gift**COMMUNION**

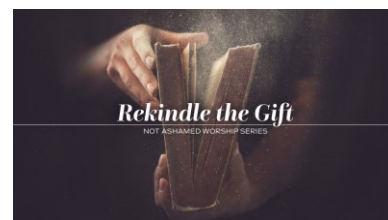
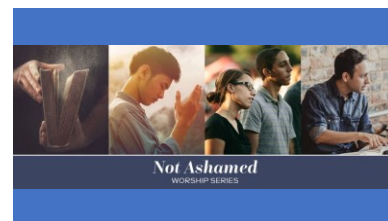
October 2, 2022

2nd Timothy 1:1-14 (and Luke 17:5-10)

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of 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 am grateful to God — whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did — when I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day. ⁴ Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.

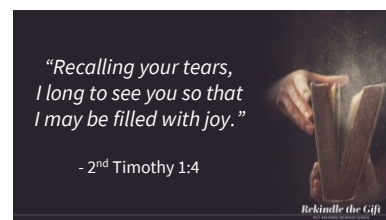
⁶ For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; ⁷ for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. ⁸ Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹ For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, ¹² and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. ¹³ Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Today we begin a new worship series, “Not Ashamed.” It draws primarily from passages in 2nd Timothy that represent the last written word from Paul. In these words we find the passing on of wisdom, the commissioning of a successor, the blessing of a veteran leader to an up-and-comer. This series urges for a revival of the soul and the passion of the church, a passion for the world that surrounds us and the needs of our neighbors. Paul says not be ashamed of our faith, but instead to see this call to action as an opportunity to live out our witness to Christ with compassion and radical hospitality, to engage the world with the heart of a servant, and to engage with our neighbors with the humble joy of those who know forgiveness and grace. As we prepare to do so with today’s message, “Rekindle the Gift,” let us pray...

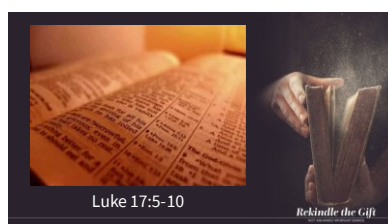


Today’s text comes from the apostle Paul. This letter is the last written text from him, penned in about 66 or 67 AD. It comes while Paul is imprisoned in Rome, awaiting an inevitable death at the hands of Roman soldiers. 2nd Timothy is a passing of the torch, a letter to Paul’s protégé. Throughout the letter we will find an awareness of his impending death. We will find bravery, faith, and his last words of encouragement to Timothy and to all who will seek to walk as disciples of Jesus Christ. Make no mistake, friends, we all fall under this call as followers of Christ. Throughout the letter, Paul challenges us to live a life of faith as we proclaim or witness to our faith every day of our lives. Each day we are called to service in the kingdom of God as kingdom builders. In today’s text, “rekindle the gift” is the way the blessing is given. This letter is written with passion. It is easy to see that depth of love that Paul has for Timothy. Turn with me to 2nd Timothy 1 as we seek to first understand the depth of Christian love.

In the opening verses we can feel Paul's emotional connection to Timothy. In verse 2 he calls Timothy *"my beloved child."* In the next verse he expresses his gratitude for those times in worship where he has had opportunity to *"remember you constantly in my prayers."* And then in verse 4, Paul writes, *"Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy."* When they were last together, the parting brought sadness to both. Paul's heart still aches for his young friend's pain.



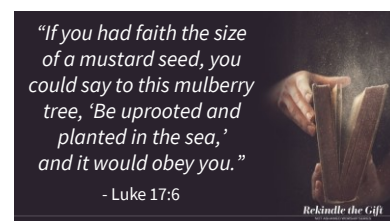
Even though he knows it unlikely to ever been together again, Paul's heart longs to be with his friend. Can you feel the depth of love in this close relationship?



Turn with me to Luke 17 now. Our gospel reading for this week begins with the disciples asking Jesus to increase their faith. Isn't that a request we would all like fulfilled by Jesus?

We in the church tend to want others to think that faith is easy to come by and is the best thing going. But by its very nature, living a life of faith is incredibly difficult. We must have a willingness to deal with uncertainty, to depend on what we cannot see, and to trust that which we cannot know. Often it feels like we do not have enough faith or that our faith is a bit lacking. This can lead us to wanting to have something a bit more "real", a bit more substantial. Jesus will have none of this with the disciples.

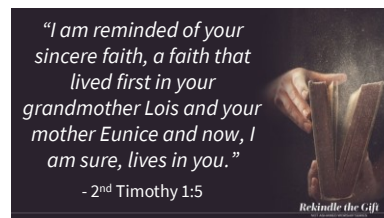
In response to their request, Jesus says, *"If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."* In essence, according to Jesus, the issue is not a lack of faith but a lack of understanding about the nature of faith.



We human beings like things to be tangible. Because of that we like things that are a little easier to identify or grasp ahold of. We like faith's shinier cousins, knowledge and confidence. We think that if we had enough of those things to go along with our faith, then maybe we could cast a mulberry tree into the sea with just our words. We like these virtues because knowledge and confidence place the control in our hands. But faith, by its nature, does not reside in our hands.

For me, and maybe for you, at times I feel like the disciples must be feeling here. They want more faith. And they want it to come to them naturally. They want to ease into a better or more mature faith. They might have been feeling like I do sometimes, and like maybe you do sometimes – that the faith we have doesn't seem like quite enough. It's not quite enough for the moment or not quiet enough for the task at hand. But faith and ease are not good partners. Faith will lead us to places where we become aware of our need, of our lack, of our dependence on God. There, in our weakness and lack of control, we will turn to and discover the one who can move mountains. Doing so we come to understand that faith is not something we possess. Faith is something that possesses us; it is something that beckons us to a life that only God can offer.

To delve deeper into the life that God offers, turn with me once again to 2nd Timothy 1. For Timothy, faith came to him first through his family. In verse 5 Paul acknowledges this as he writes, *"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you."*



In this way, Timothy is like most of us. About 80% of all Christians who profess Jesus as Lord come to faith through what our Sunday evening book calls a “dimmer switch” experience. We were raised in the church and the light of Jesus’ love has been slowly turned on, growing brighter and brighter as we grow in our faith, one day coming to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Paul, on the other hand, has what the book calls a “light switch” conversion moment. The switch was suddenly turned on. On the road to Damascus Paul met the risen Christ and his life was changed in an instant. Timothy’s dimmer switch experience began with his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois. They raised him in the faith. Later in life Paul began to pour into Timothy’s life, helping him to continue to mature and grow closer to Christ.

Please turn to the GPS section in your bulletin. We’re going to cheat a little bit this week. Grab something to write with (let me know if you need something to write with) and look at GPS question 1. The question asks: “Who has been influential in your development as a Christian? What did they do to help you grow in your faith?” Put into the context of today’s text, who are the Eunice’s and the Lois’ in your life? And how did they pour into your life, helping you to become the Christian you are today? Let’s take a minute or two to answer this question... You are on your own for #2 and #3.

Returning to the text, in verse 7 Paul reminds Timothy of *“the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands”* and invites him to rekindle this gift. Continuing Paul

reminds young Timothy of something he surely knew. His family surrounded him with faith. Paul and probably others have added to that faith. Timothy was blessed by these connections, by these relationships. Are you blessed in the same way too?



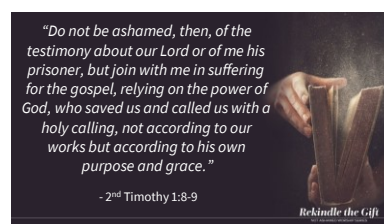
How many of you are blessed by the relationships that you have with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Jesus was also clear about the relationships that are available in the body of Christ. He spoke of the value of walking in faith together and of meeting as the body of Christ for worship. Jesus greatly valued his brothers and sisters in the family of faith, those who also did the will of God. These relationships, they too become part of the gift rekindled. The relationship that we have with one another are the means by which we experience and grow in faith. These relationships are the practical way that we live out our faith. These relationships are the anchor that we cling to when life's storm rage against us. Paul, the mentor, tells Timothy to hold fast to these relationships by which he came to the faith. When persecution or hardship comes, when struggle and pain come, when life gets messy and ugly, hold onto these relationships. They will carry us through.

As I said earlier, Paul writes from prison. It is from this place that he says, *"Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in*

suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace."

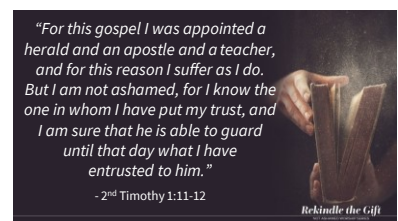
Paul is saying, don't be ashamed of me for ending up in prison. Don't be ashamed of where the gospel has brought me. Timothy, Paul says on an even deeper level, don't be ashamed of the call of the gospel, don't be ashamed to live a life of faith. Paul knows the truth of his situation.



In this life, it is not the gospel that has landed him in Rome on death row. It is the brokenness of the world that has brought him there. And it is this world that Paul has given his all to redeem, just as Christ gave his life for us. Going on, Paul implores Timothy to join him in this work, to join in suffering for the gospel as he relies on the power of God to see him through it all. Looking on through this life, Paul also invites Timothy to live out this holy calling, trusting in God's purposes for his life and in God's saving grace for this life and the life to come.

Paul speaks powerfully of grace – God's gift to us all. In Paul's theology, grace is both the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit and the redeeming love of Jesus Christ that are found present in our lives. It is that which we each claimed for ourselves when we first said "yes" to Jesus as we enter into personal relationship with our Lord. In today's passage, Paul invites Timothy to go back, to remember who he was and who he is now. But it is not just an invitation to go back. It is also an invitation to look forward from this foundation. It is an invitation to remember that he has been loved by God since the very beginning. Today we too are invited to go back, to remember our foundation, to feel again that love of God that envelops all of us.

In the last few verses Paul witnesses to the faith that he has in Christ, a faith that he hopes his young protégé will emulate. In verses 11 and 12 Paul offers this testimony: *"For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him."*



Paul is encouraging Timothy and us to cling to Christ, to hold fast to the treasure that we find in our relationships with one another and with Jesus Christ. Paul is inviting Timothy to find strength in Christ's example and in his example. In a similar way, we can look to those who we wrote down as answers to GPS question #1, drawing on their example of faith. Even if they are no longer with us, these witnesses to the faith provide powerful strength and assurance to us on our journey of faith. These faith mentors can be a source of comfort and empowerment when we recall their witness. They can sustain us in hard times. Even though Paul finds himself separated from Timothy physically, he is still supporting him, encouraging him, advising him – even from such a humble place as prison, even as his last days are being lived out in this dire situation. Paul and Timothy remain connected in Christ.

A question for us to consider within this context is this: How do we do this? How do we support, advice, encourage, mentor one another along this journey of faith? That is GPS question #2. That is homework!

As we close, the parting invitation today is to rekindle the gift of faith in our lives. The gift is both the faith itself and the relationships that sustain and grow our faith. Recall

those who have mentored us in our faith. If possible, reach out and thank those who have helped you to grow in your faith. Rekindle this week the gift of faith. The gift is the spirit of power and love and community that can overcome any obstacle, cross any gulf, and move any mountain.



As Paul encouraged Timothy, I encourage you: embrace this life of faith, both the glory and the suffering, knowing that you are not alone, knowing that we walk together, and that Christ walks with us. My friends, may we all rekindle this gift of faith. It is all we truly need. Amen and amen.

GPS - Grow, Pray, Study

- 1) *Grow*. Who has been influential in your development as a Christian?
What did they do to help you grow in your faith?
- 2) *Pray*. How do we support, advice, encourage, mentor one another along this journey of faith? Pray for God to show you ways to both give and receive.
- 3) *Study*. Read 2nd Timothy 2:3-7. How could you better serve Jesus Christ?