

Sermon for October 20, 2013 - 22nd Sunday after Pentecost

2 Timothy 3:1-5,12-17 (AAT)

Theme: Continue in what you have learned!

- 1) *Because times of trouble have come*
- 2) *Because the Scriptures will save you from them.*

¹ *Understand this, that in the last days there will come times of trouble.* ² *People will love themselves and money. They'll brag and be proud. They'll blaspheme. They'll disobey parents. They'll be ungrateful and unholy,* ³ *without love, never forgiving an enemy, slandering. They'll be without control, wild, with no love for what is good.* ⁴ *They'll be treacherous, reckless, proud. They'll love pleasure and not God.* ⁵ *They'll have the form of godliness but reject its power. Keep away from such people. . . .* ¹² *All who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted* ¹³ *But evil men and swindlers will get worse as they cheat and are cheated.* ¹⁴ *But you stay with what you've learned and found to be true. You know from whom you learned it* ¹⁵ *and how, since you were a little child, you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise and save you through faith in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁶ *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, showing what is wrong, correcting and training in right living* ¹⁷ *so that a man of God is ready and equipped for every good work.*

Over the last two weeks we've talked about the scary persecution under which Paul suffered. When he wrote 2nd Timothy, he was about to be executed for preaching the Gospel. Worse yet, the Roman government was going to continue arresting Christians and executing others. But as bad as this situation was, Paul was more concerned about what the future held – about a time of trouble that would really put pressure on Christians. And do you want to know the scariest part of Paul's words? They perfectly describe America today!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, take Paul's advice seriously and **continue clinging to the teaching you have learned.** And why? 1) *Because times of trouble have come,* and 2) *Because only the Scriptures will save you from them.*

Part One: Because times of trouble have come

Paul writes: *Understand this that in the last days there will come times of trouble.* Yes, we certainly seem to be living during these last days of trouble. America today is almost exactly how Paul described them. *People love themselves and money.* All people care about is the quality of life they can have. It seems like they only think of themselves. Sure, there is still some sense of community – but not like it used to be. Many of our older members know exactly what I am talking about. They have seen how things have changed over the years – how people seem to be more selfish and materialistic than ever before.

Turn on the news and you will see people *brag and be proud* of what they have and can accomplish. Our society even goes so far as to *blaspheme* against God. Our nation's scientist and universities claim He doesn't exist and that, even if he did, we don't need him because we are so much more enlightened than before. They tell us that we can accomplish anything if we set our minds to it.

Another disconcerting trend is how today's young people *disobey parents.* There seems to be no respect for people in authority anymore – and parents are not helping! Instead of being parents, they are trying to be buddies. They get their children whatever they want – trying to live vicariously through them. And in doing this, our nation is raising an *ungrateful* generation; people who feel like they are entitled to everything – that society owes them a good life.

Our society is becoming *unholy*. Nothing is considered sacred. Football games are played on Christmas. Black Friday shopping starts on Thanksgiving. Stores are open on Easter.

People seem to be increasingly *without love, never forgiving an enemy, and slandering* each other. Just look at all the news reports of cyber-bullying over social media. People are using Facebook and Twitter to shame others - to make fun of them in the most vile and mean ways.

People are *without control and wild* - doing whatever they want, following whatever lust or animal urge moves them. There is *no love for what is good* – for truly beautiful and lovely things. People have become *treacherous* (willing to betray their friends if it benefits them) , *reckless and proud*.

Our society loves *pleasure and not God*. Sure, some *have the form of godliness*. Many - like the ELCA, Episcopalians and many other liberal churches – pretend to love God and His Word, but they *reject its power*. How? By claiming sins, like homosexuality, are no longer sins. They sit in judgment over God's Word – twisting it to say things it does not say.

The culture we live in is the culture Paul warned Timothy about. It is a culture constantly trying to get us to fall away from our faith. It is getting worse – not better. Paul's advice in facing this culture is *Keep away from such people!*

Now, understand that Paul is not advising us to become monks and leave our country. No, rather he is telling us to avoid the culture of sin. Don't let it tempt you away from Christ. Don't join in with friends when they want to indulge in sin. Don't find entertainment in the sinful things this world finds entertainment in. Don't follow the world's pattern. Keep away from it.

You see: *All who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*. It's not a matter of if, but when. The world hates Christians. If you live a godly life – avoiding sin and confessing Christ to your friends and neighbors, people will make fun of you. Life will not be easy.

This, dear brothers and sisters, is the scary reality of our times. How can we be prepared to meet these temptations? It is so easy to laugh along with the world instead of speaking out against its selfishness and sin. It is so easy to just go with the flow – especially when they make us Christians out to be the bad guys: hypocrites who think they are better than everyone else. We know that we aren't better. We know that we are sinful. Who will save us from all this temptation surrounding us? Truth be told, we often join the world. We often hide our faith, don't we? Who will save us from our sins?

Jesus will. He lived the perfect life we all failed to live. He died on the cross to take away all our sin. He doesn't want us lost. This is why he warns us of the danger. This is why he calls us to repentance. This is why he forgives us. And not only does Jesus forgive us, He also shows us a way to stand up under all the pressure we face from the world.

Part Two: *Because the Scriptures will save you from them.*

As Paul told Timothy, so the LORD tells us: *But you stay with what you've learned and found to be true.*

What is it you have learned and found to be true? It is the truths of Scripture that you learned in confirmation class from Luther's Small Catechism. You know the Ten Commandments and what they mean. You learned from the Creed who God is and what he has done to save you. You know from the Lord's Prayer the loving relationship you have with God – a relationship that began at your baptism and that is sustained through Word and Sacrament. These are the truths you learned in childhood, truths that many of your parents passed on to

you even before you studied the Catechism by regularly bringing you to church and Sunday school and by reading Bible stories with you at home.

But even if you didn't have parents like this, you still learned these truths at some point in your life. Now stay in these truths. Continue reviewing the basic Biblical teachings you learned in Catechism class. Continue studying the Holy Scriptures. And why? Because they *are able to make you wise and save you through faith in Christ Jesus*.

The Bible alone gives you all the information you need to live on this earth and get you ready for life eternal. It makes you wise. Wise to what? First of all, wise to our situation: that we are sinful. All people on this earth are selfish. It has been this way ever since Adam and Eve fell into sin. There is no one who is good, not even one. God's Law shows us that we need a Savior.

And that brings me to the next thing the Bible teaches us: who the Savior is. Only the Bible reveals God's great love for us in Jesus. Only the Bible tells us how he lived, died, and rose again for us. Only the Bible calls us to repent of our sins, and trust in Him for forgiveness. Only God's Word can save us by creating faith in our hearts.

And we can trust the Bible. Why? Because *All Scripture is inspired by God*. The Bible is not just a human collection of ancient morality stories and fairy tales. No, every word in Scripture is a word God intended to be there. Even though the various books of the Bible were written by people, God inspired each one. He directed each stroke of their pen to record exactly what He wanted written for our edification.

The Bible is God's inspired word. It saves. It makes us wise. It is *useful for teaching*. It shows us the truth about everything. It is useful for *showing what is wrong*. Sin is what God's Word says is sin and it warns us to avoid it and repent when we fall.

God's word is also useful in *correcting* those who repent. Having shown us what is wrong, God's Word puts us on the right path. The Gospel forgives us. God's Word shows us the good God wants us to do in the peace of His forgiveness. By studying His word, we receive continual *training in right living so that we, God's dearly loved children, are ready and equipped for every good work*.

God's Word is a light for our path in this dark world of sin. With so many voices calling us to follow them, to indulge in the pleasures of sin, how wonderful it is to have God's Word by our side and in our hands. Only it can tell us how we can please God through thankful living. Only it can equip us for our life during these perilous days for our soul, and deliver us into God's Kingdom.

But in order for the Word to do these things, we need to use it – and not just for an hour and some change on Sunday, but all the time. Read the Bible every day.

“But,” you might say, “I don't understand it!” Then consider using a simpler translation like the AAT Bible we offer in the back of church. Consider coming to Bible class so that you can get your questions answered. Don't be afraid of others looking down on you for not knowing enough of God's Word. People attend Bible class to grow, not show off.

Another great tool to help you continue in what you have learned is Luther's Small Catechism. What a great resource this is! The Catechism is both a summary and index to the Scriptures – directing you right to the answers you need to find. The wisest Lutherans keep and consult their Catechisms their entire life. Why? Because the Catechism always points them to Scripture in the simplest of ways. I can't think of one frequently ask question or modern dilemma that the Catechism doesn't answer – if not directly, then at least by pointing you to the Scriptures that can answer it for you. Use this great treasure with your Bible, and

you will most certainly find the strength, comfort, courage and patience you need to face the evils of our age. How so? Because God will send you His Spirit to guide you in your use of His Word. He will make you a light of truth and grace in this dark world of sin.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, don't be complacent with your faith. **Continue in what you have learned!** Why? *Because times of trouble have certainly come, and because the Scriptures will save you from them.* Amen.