

I'm Coming Home

October 6, 2013

2 Timothy 1:1-14

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life which 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 thank God whom I serve with a clear conscience, as did my fathers, when I remember you constantly in my prayers. ⁴ As I remember your tears, I long night and day to see you, that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lo'is and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you. ⁶ Hence 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 timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control. ⁸ Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago,¹⁰ and now has manifested 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 preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹² and therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me. ¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; ¹⁴ guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

Today is Homecoming Sunday and what a glorious day for it too! This morning was a misty awesome reminder of the presence of fall in the air. The Sun rose shining its beams of light to warm us as we awoke. We each got ready with anticipation on our minds. Who will be here, who will I know, who do we get to see today? And we know too, we all have to be honest and admit that this thought resides in the back of our minds all during our service, that there will be wonderful food and faithful fellowship soon. Some of us are even thinking about those favorite dishes that we hope will be present.

Homecoming Sunday! It is a Sunday for celebration, for welcoming of our members old and new. It is a time for remembrance, a time to recollect and honor our past. It is a time to talk about the good old days that once were. To mutually lament that those good old days are gone. It is a special time for remembrance of who we were and who has helped lead us to this moment and this time.

Because in this moment and in this time is where we are now. 2 Timothy is an interesting epistle. It is one of the few books that almost all scholars concur was not written by Paul although it begins as if it was. Remember that writing in the style of another or pseudonymous writing was a very common practice and was not considered plagiarism. This form of writing was a form of flattery and a form of accreditation for the writer's words to be accepted because they were in the same style as another. The letters of Timothy and the letter to Titus are often termed the 'Pastoral Epistles'. They have this term because they are very instruction based on how to be in ministry. There is a reason many of us who are called into ministry are called Timothy's or in my case Priscilla's. It is through the instruction in such letters that those in ministry gain a better understanding of how to live out the lives we are called to live.

Jerry Sumney, a professor of Biblical Studies at my own Alma Mater of Lexington Theological Seminary has this view of 2 Timothy. He says:

“Examples of faith. 2 Timothy reminds readers of the importance of having examples to follow and of being examples for others. Paul is [of course] the primary example the letter sets forward, but it also pictures Timothy’s mother and grandmother (1:5) as people through whom Timothy came to faith. The letter alternates between naming good and bad examples, with the implication that the readers should follow the example of some people and avoid being like others. So believers are called to imitate those who believe correct teaching and whose lives conform to what God wants. At the same time, they are to become the kids of people who teach the faith by the way they live.” –Jerry Sumney, page 347, *The Bible, an Introduction*.

Examples of faith. That is what we remember today. Many of us are here because we came to know God here or more accurately we came to know God due to the people here. Or we are here because as we have grown in faith in this place, with these people so consider this church our home.

We have come to know God here whether a short time or many years ago. We come to know God and we come to know Jesus and we come to see and feel the Holy Spirit at work and present in our lives. There is a song by Watermark out there it is a conversation with Jesus and asks Jesus to “come and make my heart your home.”

Come and make my heart your home. Interesting words are they not? Home means a lot to each of us whether it is here at Hooker Memorial or our own homes. There is a sense of familiarity, a sense of welcome no matter how long we have been away when we walk in the doors. We know the minute we open the door that we are welcomed, wanted, desired, and important.

As we read through our scripture today it talks about the examples of those who have come before us as encouragement for ourselves to continue on in our love of Jesus. But I got to thinking (and I will admit this is a Sunday morning sermon re-write because the Spirit sometimes calls us to do this) that I am super comfortable coming home to my home church. Super comfortable in almost any church. But that request in the song is one that makes me take a step back.

The request for Jesus to make my heart his home. It means make Jesus feel welcomed, wanted, desired, and important in my, in your, in each of our hearts.

But how often do we do that truly? How often do we allow Jesus into our hearts, into our homes, into our lives? As I was at the Revival at our sister congregation Timothy Christian Church this week a couple of points really struck me.

You see Homecoming is a wonderful time. It calls us to honor our heritage and how we have come to this moment in time.

Our past leads us to this moment, and leads us to this time. BUT truly we can not stay in the past. We have to move forward. These words in Timothy compel us to move forward. They charge us to remember our past in the best way possible by moving forward.

You see the church, in all its glorious past is not for us to lament what once was or lament that things are different now. We have to honor those differences. We have to embrace them and use them and live in and amidst them otherwise we do those who came before us a disservice.

They lived their lives in faith, they came to faith, they taught us in faith so that we can remember them with fondness but that is not all of it. They taught us in faith so that we can live out our faith. If we do not we dishonor them. We ignore their teachings and we have no place to come home to because it is no longer there.

Right now we have this wonderful place, we have these wonderful memories but what will we have if we do not propel ourselves forward. You see too it is important to remember, as we get older that the church is only one generation away from dying. One single generation away from being no more. I can not emphasize this enough. We have to remember that the faith we have taught and shared with others we can not stifle. We have to allow it room to grow, room to be and room to manifest itself. We do ourselves a disservice and denounce our own faith if we do not allow those whom we have led to or helped to grow in faith to be their amazing and wonderful selves.

We have to give everyone room to grow, room to be the faithful people so that we can honor and love one another at all times and in all times. Amen.