

Sermon – “Rekindling the Gift of God”

Sunday, October 6, 2019

World Communion Sunday

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 1:1-14

Christian Ko Choi

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Springfield, Illinois

Today, we are reading from the last letter that Paul has written. Second Timothy is known to be one of the most personal and most often quoted of the Bible. Let us hear the personal message that God has prepared for us through 2 Timothy 1:1-14. Hear the Word of the Lord.

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,^[a] 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.^[b] 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.

Sermon: "Rekindling the Gift of God"

Text: 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. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. – 2 Timothy 1:5-7

Starting with Commotion Sunday, last month, during 10 a.m. Sunday service, we are going through the stained windows as a part of children's sermon series. Two weeks ago, we went over the stained window of Eunice, along with a Scripture which today's sermon focuses.

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.

I remember sharing that Eunice is holding a Bible, which holds the eternal truth and is not simply about information, but for the transformation of the people. I would like to explore little deeper in thought with you today.

Most of us are blessed in a way that we take for granted or think it is a norm. I experienced one of these moments when I was at the seminary. I had a pleasure of meeting an older gentleman who was from Korea, studying theology in my classes. As I got to know him better, he started to open his heart and his appreciation for our friendship, but also shed light on his innerworkings of his heart, especially his personal battles dealing with envy whenever he was meeting with me. In the beginning, I did not understand what he was referring to, as he was getting higher grades, already blessed with a beautiful family, and was ahead of me in the journey of life, navigating it successfully. What he was envious of, really made me think for years to come. He was not only envious but rather frustrated that I did not understand the value of being raised in a Christian home. He told me that he had to fight every urge to do things his way: he was experiencing the saying, "The longest distance is the distance between one's mind to one's heart," as he was dealing his knowledge of how Christian are supposed to be and the difficulty of putting it into practice.

We are blessed because there has been people in our lives who shaped us, who encouraged us, and sometimes forced us to practice what we are taught in our Sunday school and through the Bible: how to share our first love with others – Christ's love. I do not know about your parents, but I had tough parents who believed in education. When

it came to school, my parents made sure that I would be at school as long as there was air in my lungs. When your name gets called out front of all your friends that you had perfect attendance at school, it does not feel like the greatest achievement. Trust me, there were many mornings revolution or coup that was put down. Being a pastor's kid, if you thought going to school was a mandate, church was at a higher calling. In my parent's eyes, the education of faith was more important. As I grew up and realized as I have my own children, I have learned that the theories of sciences will be adopted, better formula of mathematics will be identified, and with the explosion of technology many things will change; but the steadfast love of God will endure forever.

We are blessed because we are a part of a spiritual community that not only practice love of God with one another, but also extend such practice in our daily lives outside these walls, to make an impact in someone else's life. We need to remember those who have been vital to our spiritual formation as well as those who are encouraging us now, and give thanks to the Lord for placing them in our lives; to not to take them for granted, but to remember them as a blessing and heavenly treasures that we have.

Once we realize the blessings that are around us, we are challenged to be the extension of God's love to those who are round us. Today's Scripture's silence towards Timothy's father highlights a similar insight that my seminary friend had. In Jewish culture, it is usually the responsibility of one's father to instruct the Jewish education to their children: to teach them about prayer, Scripture, the laws, and faith. Although it was not the typical role of the women to do such, Timothy received his sincerest faith from his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice as well as his spiritual father, Paul. It is not only for your children but for all the children of God whom we are called to share Christ's love and faith. We are blessed with our children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and perhaps even great-great-grandchildren to share our faith and love.

I have come across many people take the same position as Moses, that they are limited in how they can reach others. Do you remember when Moses was approached by God in a form of a burning bush? Moses said, how can I make them believe? That I have never been eloquent in my speech?¹ God walked with Moses then, and God is still with us today, for Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.² Even today's passage tells us that it is never too late to start sharing of our faith stories, as Paul is sharing with the grown Timothy. In this letter, Paul knows that his time on earth is limited:

⁶ As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ From now on there is reserved for me the crown of

¹ Exodus 4

² Hebrews 13:8

righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.³

Paul's age or availability never hindered his ministry to Timothy and many others, as his letters from the prison became the channel of love that communicated, encouraged and shed light to rekindle the gift of God that is residing within all of us.

The challenge for us today is rekindling the gift of God that is not only within us, but in others around us. When we are rekindling the gift of God, it does not come cheap. Christ died for us so that we may be saved, to be at the Lord's table together. It requires our sacrifice. But it is our sacrificial act of faith that will be remembered when they grow up and face difficulties along their own faith journey. As today's passage reminds us,

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 ... ⁷ for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

Let us live out our faith with boldness as we exercise the spirit of power, and of love, and of self-discipline to rekindle the gift of God within and around us today. Amen.

³ 2 Timothy 4:6-8