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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
December 8, 2013
2nd Sunday in Advent

Scripture Lessons: Malachi 4:1-6; Luke 17:20-30

Hymns: 70; 73; 64; 466:4 (6)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 1 Timothy 6:11-16

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, 15 which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ, our coming Savior, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: Relating Faith with Life.

Making this connection between faith and life is both automatic in that the Spirit produces fruits of faith in the life of every true child of God, and tricky because the ways of the world are very sneaky, and sin is always at the door seeking to find its way into our lives. So the Apostle Paul was very direct in encouraging this young pastor, (the words of our text were not written to a congregation struggling with faith and life, but to a young pastor) to pay attention to things spiritual in his daily walk in life.

We are in the Advent season of the church year, a time in which our meditations are focused on the Christian's spiritual preparation for the coming of the Lord. In each of these services we will be referencing the incarnation of Christ, for the celebration of Jesus' birth remains a highlight and the culmination of this season of the Church Year. However in preparing to observe the anniversary of the Savior's birth we will also need to examine ourselves in preparations for His spiritual visitation in our hearts, and the Lord's return on the last day. Paul's encouragement to Timothy, and so also to us, is that while we are in the midst of this life it is time for us to --

THEME: Lay Hold on Eternal Life.

Paul's choice of terminology is significant. He exhorts --

I. Fight the Good Fight of Faith.

Paul's choice of words tell us right away that we are in a **struggle**, a **spiritual** struggle. However, this spiritual struggle involves us in opposing that which is evil. We are not to simply think that going along with the times, and society's values are going to keep us on track to eternal life. So Paul said:

1 Timothy 6:11-12 “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

First Paul's words instruct Timothy to “**flee these things.**” We need to understand what things? Earlier in this chapter of 1 Timothy Paul warned against those who “teach otherwise, and do not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1 Tim. 6:3). It was a grave danger even for a pastor to associate with those who teach other than God's Word teaches. Paul went on to say that with such false teaching comes pride and arguments over words, and “envy and strife” and “useless wranglings of men ... who suppose that godliness is a means of gain” (1 Timothy 6:5).

Paul's warnings and instruction apply to us every bit as much as they did to Timothy almost 2000 years ago. Today there is so much twisting of the truth and the neglect of the proper teaching of law and gospel that people become very confused. They are deceived into thinking that sin is not sinful, or that it is not harmful to

one's soul. They are deceived into thinking that religion is about prosperity as they see televangelists continually asking for their money with a promise of financial security tied to their giving instead of to the kindness of our God. We need to hear Paul's reminder that it is "godliness with contentment *that* is great gain," as well as the warning that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and that those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, and that some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim 6:6-10).

Even as Paul reminded Timothy of the need to flee from false teaching and greed and envy and covetousness so we also need to recognize these things in the world around us, and **Flee!** It is so easy to embrace the easier and more popular trends in religious culture. It is so easy to embrace the Wall Street motto that greed is good, and a necessary component in our economy that we forget the dangers to our souls. Because it is so easy to go along with the flow of the world around it takes a fight. We need to fight the good fight against these evil as they seek to come a part of us, a part of our lives, a part of our faith, as they seek to find a home in our souls.

The next big thing emphasized by Paul is understanding the duration of our struggle against that which is contrary to our faith. We are encouraged to --

II. Live Our Faith with Perseverance.

1 Timothy 6:13-15a I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless

until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, 15 which He will manifest in His own time.”

Paul reminds us that **it is God who gave us life**. That flies right in the face of the rationalization “It’s my life, I’ll do what I want.” Not only is one’s life God’s because God is the author of all life, but also because we are redeemed by Christ, as Paul wrote also to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 9:19-20 Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

We glorify God by maintaining a good confession, even as Jesus did before Pontius Pilate. Pilate knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that Jesus was a righteous man. Indeed Jesus testified boldly that His life was not about this world, but that His kingdom was not of this world. Even in the face of severe pressure and all the lies and defamation Jesus maintained a good confession of faith. All that went into our soul’s salvation. His righteousness has been credited to us. He endured the curse of crucifixion to deliver us from the condemnation we deserved.

This is our confession that we love honor and praise and glorify Him who saved us from death and secured for us and delivered to us this eternal life to which we have laid hold by faith. This isn’t just something we confess in the creed in church. This is what our life declares before the unbelieving world just as Jesus confessed a god confession before an unbelieving Pontius Pilate. And

then we remember that while we live we are watching for the Day, that great and glorious Day when Christ shall return in glory to receive us to Himself. Until that day we continue steadfast in the faith and in our confession. Not just for a while, or until it is inconvenient, or we grow lackadaisical. No we persevere in the faith, and in our confession, in our Christian life until Christ's appearing when we shall be delivered safe and sound to His Father in heaven. Lay hold on eternal Life with perseverance; --

III. Remember Jesus Has All Power.

We live in a world that seems at times to overwhelm us. We feel like we are being run over by the powers of darkness. It appears that it is not the righteous, but rather the UNrighteous who flourish. One perhaps can't help but wonder if the devil really was vanquished by Jesus' death and resurrection.

Remember who has the power. Remember the power that He possesses! Even as Paul reminded us to watch for the Lord's coming so a stream of praise flows from his heart reminding us of the power and glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 6:15b- 16 He ... is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

That stream of praise isn't vanity, or empty flattery trying to curry the favor of one with an inflated ego. That is what goes on in the world, not with the Lord. We are assured that Jesus was and is and ever shall be the Victor,

the Champion of our faith, and the Ruler of the world. He alone has immortality. The greatest of earthly rulers all fail, because they grow old, and then they die, and they pass from the scene. Jesus is the eternal God. He shall never pass from the scene. Christ Rules the world for the good of His Church. Jesus rules the world for our welfare. He cares for you!

His glory does not fade away. The glory of man fades away. As one gets farther and a farther away from the deeds that a man has done one will see the benefits of what they have accomplished fade into history because they are no longer applicable to modern times. One sees their glory fade. That is not the case with Jesus. He came into the world to be Savior of the world. He offered Himself for our redemption, once and for all, for all men and for all time!. And so God exalted Him (also according to His human nature) to the glory of heaven where He sits at the right hand of the Father. The glory that belongs to Jesus is the glory of God. He dwells in unapproachable light! It is a glory that does not fade away! This is the Lord our Redeemer! We read of Him in --

Hebrews 12:2-3 “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Great honor has been given to Him, honor before God; honor surpassing all honor known to man! And POWER as well, EVERLASTING power. The powers of darkness in this world are not so great a we imagine. Oh, they are

great, great indeed **compared to us**, but they are **nothing** before the Lord Jesus who has all power in heaven and on earth. The authority God has given Him surpasses all, and **He keeps us secure**; He keeps our salvation secure. **Put your trust in Jesus**, and --

Conclusion: Take Hold of Eternal Life.

Yes, it is a battle with temptations from within, as well as the temptations and allurements from the world. We need **to fight the good fight** of faith. We need to resist the devil and all temptation to sin. Our eternal salvation is not something which we should take for granted, but rather something we should treasure and care for each and every day. And so we **take hold of eternal life with perseverance**, day by day turning to the Lord, and strengthening ourselves in the Word. With the Word of the Lord we need not fear, for the Word directs us to **the Lord and His power and glory**.

1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which **you** were also called!

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.