



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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October 21, 2007

21st Sunday after Pentecost

2 Timothy 2:8-13

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Ruth 1:1-19a

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 111

Second Lesson: 2 Timothy 2:8-13

Gospel: Luke 17:11-19

Endure with Christ

A couple of times in these words that Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy, he talks about enduring. I remember seeing a report about endurance on television once, so I looked into it a little bit. For some people I guess, running 26 miles of a marathon just isn't enough. They have to run something called an ultra marathon. I found out they run ultra marathons all over the world. And on every continent, even on the continent of Antarctica, they run this ultra marathon—seventy-some miles they run in Antarctica. There are a lot of things in life I can't understand, and that would be one of them. My idea of endurance is getting up to get my own ice cream out of the freezer when my kids won't get it. But endurance, whatever my idea of it or your idea of it, God's idea of it is pretty important for us today and that is what he is talking to us about.

Paul talked to Timothy about enduring in the face of the difficulties he was going to find. God speaks to us about enduring as we face some of the same difficulties. He tells us how and he also tells us why. He says, "Endure with Christ." How?—By remembering Jesus Christ, descended from David, raised from the dead. Why?—This might be something we forget about at times. Paul lays out a very specific purpose that he was willing to endure prison. He was willing to endure hardship. He says, "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect." Not just for his sake, but for the sake of others who would believe and be saved. That might be eye-opening for us, I think.

Remember now again, we looked at 2 Timothy a little bit last week. We started to look at it and remember Paul is now in his second Roman imprisonment. He had been released. He had done whatever he had done in between—Scripture doesn't tell us. But now he was in chains again for the sake of the gospel, because he was preaching the gospel. He writes this last letter that comes from his pen in Scriptures to Timothy, the young pastor, and gives him a lot of trustworthy sayings, things to hang his hat on as Timothy is going to carry on his ministry. Last week we looked at how Paul longed to see Timothy again—that deep connection—that love that was there between the two of them. Now he writes to him and says, "You need to endure. I am enduring with Christ and if we endure, we will also reign with God."

But there were going to be things that were going to be a threat to his endurance. One of them was the fact that his mentor, the man he looked up to, was in prison. So Paul says to him, "Don't just remember that I am in prison. Don't just remember who I am. Don't put your confidence in me because things will happen to me." He says later, "I am being poured out like a drink offering. I am going to be gone soon, but the one who will never be gone from your life young Timothy, is Jesus Christ. So remember Jesus

Christ as you endure. Remember him; raised from the dead; descended from David; true God who became true man; who lived in the place of all people; who died in the place of all people; who took away all sins of all time.” We know that because he was raised from the dead.

Timothy would have known that this was Paul’s message. This was his gospel—a message that pointed people away from themselves and pointed them to God for all of their confidence, for all of the strength, for all of their forgiveness. He says to Timothy, “You know what? Right now I might be chained like a criminal. I am chained like a criminal because I preach this gospel, and I wouldn’t stop preaching this gospel, but don’t let that be something that wears you down or causes you worry or is a struggle for you as you seek to endure with Christ, because God’s Word is not chained.”

God’s Word didn’t depend on Paul being the one that was speaking it. God’s Word didn’t depend on Timothy being the one speaking it. God’s Word doesn’t depend on me or anyone else being the one speaking it. God’s Word is not chained. The gospel message that Christ takes away sin, the gospel message that the Spirit works through to bring us to faith to trust that what Jesus did for the world he did for us personally, cannot be chained. So remember as you face things that wear you down. Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David.

There are a lot of things that are going to wear us down, things that we have to endure while we go through this world—the effects of living in a sinful world—disease, heartache, loss, grief, suffering, pain; the results of our own sins; the guilt that we have because we have said and done things that hurt people we love; the guilt that we have because we have said and done things to people that we don’t love but we know we should have treated better. Satan is going to try to get us to focus on those things instead of on Christ. He is going to try to wear us down and lead us away from God because we see all the various things that cause us trouble and worry and pain and suffering. So as you and I face them, endure with Christ, remember him, and then focus again on the trustworthy saying that Paul pointed Timothy and us to—“If we died with him (Jesus), we will also live with him.”

Question—when did we die with him? You all look like you are still breathing, maybe with your eyes closed, but you all look like you’re still breathing. When did we die with him then? It’s right in front of you, isn’t it? Right there in the middle of the church, right at the bottom of the steps—we were buried with Christ in our baptism that we might rise to live a new life. The spiritual life that we didn’t have God gave us in our baptism, or through the Word if we believed before we were baptized. But we died with Christ and we were born again so that now we have spiritual life and we believe that Jesus is our Savior. As we continue, we will also live with him. If we endure, if we put up with the things of this world that are only temporary, he says we will also reign with him. We will reign with him in a glory that is everlasting, a glory that is beyond understanding, a glory that is beyond expression right here and now. That is a trustworthy saying.

But Paul gives to Timothy another trustworthy saying that is a warning. If we disown him, if the things that we are enduring become too much for us and we turn in some other direction for our comfort and our consolation, if we turn some other way and we

don't remain connected with Christ, if we don't remember Christ, if we don't endure with Christ, if we disown him, he will also disown us. Jesus himself said, "Whoever disowns me, I will disown before the Father. Whoever denies me, I will deny." If we are not connected to Christ through faith, all that he has done for us is lost to us. That is why he warns us to stay close to Christ and endure with Christ.

This is God's idea. This isn't a pastor's idea. This isn't a teacher's idea. This isn't someone else's idea. When they say to you, "Stay close to Christ," God is saying it. He is telling us to be in the Word. Be in the Sacraments. Be close to him. Make it a part of your daily life, either alone or with other Christians, but by all means, do it! "This is what my advice is to you." That is what our God says to us.

He also tells us that if we are faithless, God remains faithful. That doesn't mean it doesn't matter what we do and if we fall away he will still take us to heaven. No, that means that he is faithful to his Word. If we are faithless and turn our backs on God, God remains faithful. He has said that without Christ you will go to hell.

If we are faithless and come back to him, God is also faithful to his Word. He says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though you have wandered from me, I have remained close to you." The Lord is your shade at your right hand. God cannot disown himself. If he has spoken it, it will be so. So endure with Christ by remembering Jesus Christ. That is God's Word to us.

That is how we do it, but why we do it is not just a matter of selfishness. It's not just a matter of what it does for me. Paul doesn't say, "I'm enduring all of this so that I'm going to go to heaven." He says, "Because God's Word is not chained, therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect." If God's Word was chained, Paul would not endure being in prison. He would do what it would take to get out of it so that he could continue to proclaim it if it was dependent upon him. But it wasn't. So he endured it in the way that brought glory to God. He put his trust in God. He lived for God. He spoke for God as he had the chance, but he submitted to the governing authorities because God's Word was not chained. He wanted to set that example for the elect.

So the question then is—who are the elect? We are not talking about elected officials, so who are we talking about? The elect are all those who will be in heaven and God has known from all eternity. They are those who believe right now and those who do not believe right now who will believe before they die. So for the sake of those who are believers and those who are not believers but God knew would be believers, Paul was willing to endure things that were hard for him, that were difficult for him, the things that he didn't enjoy. When you read this letter, you know he didn't enjoy his second Roman imprisonment. It was not fun. It was a bitter cup to drink, and yet, he drank it because he knew it would benefit those who love God and those who would love God.

Does that surprise you? Does that open your eyes to a new purpose for life that maybe you don't always think about? We talk about the fellowship of believers. It is really this joining together, the sharing together and having a joint thing in common, and because of it, we belong to one another. The fellowship of believers isn't talking and having a cup of coffee together. We often call that fellowship, but it's much more than that. It's

this being united to one another. It's treasuring it and finding joy in it the way that Paul did and the way that John did in his letters.

Do we always do that? Do we view each other as an incredible blessing—our brothers and sisters in Christ. Do we say, “I am willing to suffer whatever hardship I have and do it in a way that glorifies God because it will strengthen you, my dear brother or my loved sister in Christ”? Sometimes our faith, I think, soars to those heights. And sometimes I think our faith is maybe weak or our sinful pride has gotten the most of us or our sinful selfishness has gotten the most of us and we focus on enduring only for the sake of ourselves. But God's love for us in Christ, the forgiveness he has given to us, lifts our eyes a little higher so that we don't just look to ourselves. We look to those around us. We look to our God and we do these things out of love for God because we know that God will use how we endure with Christ to be a blessing to others. We have a deep and abiding love for all the elect. We want them to be close to Christ and we do what we can so that they can be close to Christ.

That is how we endure, and that's an incredibly, wonderful reason to endure!