

Oct 3 2010 WW Communion 2 Tim. 1:1-14

REKINDLE THE GIFT

We all like words of encouragement. No one I know looks forward to hearing negative stuff. We want to hear the good stuff we are doing, especially if you're going through a tough time. When you watch sports as I do, you see a manager go to change his pitcher, take the ball from him, pat him on the backside with a few words of encouragement and send him to the showers, then hands the ball to the new pitcher with words of encouragement to throw strikes. After all, we do have bad days and we don't need to be torn down, but built up. You and I know, especially I know, and it's hard to realize not every one of my sermons is excellent. I know, I know you all think they are the best messages you've ever heard, except for so and so, and you know who, but to be honest, there has been one or two that was....maybe one.....though I can't remember any lousy sermons I've preached. You see, they are all good because God uses them all, the good and the bad and the great ones and the ugly ones to touch just that person He is speaking to.

Encouragement we all like to hear those words of hope and appreciation. In fact Paul has written that we are to use the gifts God has given us to encourage each other, to build one another up in the Lord so that we can grow in our faith and in our service to him. We are to be filled with the 'joy of the Lord' in all we do, everywhere we go. We have enough people who walk around with frowns on their faces. We need to see happy faces. There was a fellow and his wife in Roanoke that didn't always have it easy. However he was a good Christian man and no matter what he faced if you said, "Richard, how are you today?" he would bellow back, "Happy!" And so he was, no matter the circumstance he found himself in.

This morning we focus on Holy Communion a lesson of encouragement reminding us of God's love and Jesus' redeeming power. Our lesson is about two men. One, the man God called to be his witness to the Gentile nation. His name is Paul and he sits in a prison in Rome waiting to be executed. Paul knew what it was to persecute the Christian community, and then was on the opposite side, receiving persecution, stoning, prison time, and now in Rome waiting his execution. The other is a new

convert. His name is Timothy. He came from a mother and grandmother who had strong faith. One day he heard God's call to follow and to preach and teach wherever he was, or wherever he went. Two men. Different backgrounds. But the same Lord, the same faith, the same power and enthusiasm to bring the message of life through Jesus Christ to the lost people of their time. That's what this letter is all about. It's about Paul's closing words to his son-in-the-Lord Timothy, who had taken up the torch of the Gospel and was passing it on. However, as we have seen countless of times in the New Testament, and just like our world today, it wasn't an easy task. Not all accepted God's word. Not all heeded the call to salvation. Not all wanted to embrace the new life that was offered through receiving Jesus Christ as their Savior. He may have felt ridicule for his beliefs. He may have lost friends because he no longer did the things they did. Maybe he was discouraged and his faith was suffering. Somehow Paul heard about the difficult times Timothy was having, so came this letter of encouragement to **REKINDLE HIS FAITH AND THE GIFT** that God had given him. Hear now God's words for Timothy and for us. **READ 1-14**

Words of encouragement. You know, those words could be for us today. We are called to rekindle that flame that sometimes seems to become just a flicker. It's often hard to keep the faith when you're around nonbelievers or those who say they believe but do not practice their faith anywhere else outside the church building. Sometimes we want to be accepted and are afraid if we practice our faith around nonbelievers we will be left out. Ask some teenagers about that, or college students, or maybe you've felt that way when you were younger and maybe even today. If you ask Carole where was her best employment, hands down she would say working at the Seminary being secretary for 10 professors then being the secretary for the Vice President of Development. Those were her joy years because of the character of those she worked with. It was different working in a law office, or in a church of another denomination. While I was getting my degrees, she was getting her education from some wonderful men of great, deep faith. As far as we were concerned, we were on hallowed ground at Asbury and the teachers and staff was fanning the flames of our faith.

Sometimes the world tries to mold us into its thinking and its ways.

Sometime we lose our first love and lose the enthusiasm to keep on keeping on. Sometimes you hate getting up in the morning and heading for the office. You have lost your enthusiasm for what you are doing.

Look at all those teams that have not made it to the playoffs year after year. When they have been eliminated I'm sure it's hard to keep up the enthusiasm they had the first few months of the season. The older players kind of give up at times. They lose the spark. They begin to play for their own glory, or just go through the motions until the season ends.

But then there are those who haven't played much, and those who got the call to join the team and when they get to play they go all out. They play with enthusiasm hoping to make an impression on the coaching staff that they are ready for the big leagues and this team. They are fired up, to use a basketball type cheer. Somehow that mean old devil whispers in someone's ear that no one cares, no one will notice and the joy and enthusiasm goes away. I'd like to remind you this someone does care. God cares!

In the translation I use, Paul begins his letter with these words, “Paul an apostle by the will of God. God sent me to tell about the promise of life that is in Jesus Christ.”

I like that. I like those words. “God sent me to tell about the promise of life that is in Jesus Christ.” Those certainly are words of encouragement for me this morning reminding me why I stand in this pulpit every week, why I visit in hospitals and homes, why I speak up in Sunday School, why I haven’t retired fully. God has sent me to tell the promise of life that is in Jesus Christ.

If you were receiving this letter and it began with those words perhaps you would find new encouragement, new life in what you were doing.

For Timothy it was a reminder that through Paul’s faith his grandmother, his mother and even he found that new life that Paul was preaching.

Sometimes we need to be like that balloon that loses its air, or that basketball that when you bounce it, it just goes flat, or that football that when you pick it up it just squishes. What do these deflated balls need?

They need new life breathed into them. We Christians need the breath of God breathed into us. That’s one of the reasons we need to come to

worship God. That's why we need to spend time with God in prayer, in reading His Word, and reading Christian books that encourage us and pump us up when we feel down. We come to God asking him to breathe new life into us through the singing, through his message, through his spoken word. We have a hymn that states "Breathe on me breath of God, fill me with life anew, that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do....breathe on me breath of God, till I am wholly thine, till all this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine." Words of hope. Wonderful words of life. Words of encouragement to hang in there when the world throws you lemons. God never promised us a rose garden...and by the way have you ever tried to pick a rose from a rose bush? What do you often find? Thorns! The world is filled with thorny people and thorny situations. But remember, we have the Rose of Sharon with us....we have Jesus.

Remember the promises of life. Don't look at the short term, but the long term. We are on the Calvary road to the promise land. There might be bumps and pot holes but the longer you are on that road the smoother

it gets for Jesus is like the road construction crews we see on route 55 fixing the road, making a new pathway to follow.

Isn't that what we celebrate every time we take communion? It should be. We aren't really celebrating his death, but his promise of life that comes through his resurrection. "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again" we are reminded. And because he lives, like we already know, we can face another tomorrow.

Paul wants Timothy to rekindle the gift that God gave him. He wants to rekindle the flame, the burning passion of his faith being reminded of the gift of life he had been given and the gift of sharing with others God's promises. Paul knows the hardships Timothy was facing and he wanted to remind him not to give up, to remain faithful to his calling. He says, "I remember your true faith. That faith first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and I know you now have that same faith." Now here are those words Timothy needed to hear with his ears, his head and his heart. When he read and reread and reread them again and again, Timothy's heart began to pump faster with excitement as he read, "*This is why I remind you to keep using the gift God gave you*

when I laid my hands on you. Now let it grow, as a small flame grows into a fire. God did not give us a spirit that makes us afraid but a spirit of power and love and self-control.”

There is a camp fire song often sung because the campfire is a vivid imagery. You all know it, I'm sure. “It only takes a spark to get a fire going. And soon all those around can warm up in its glowing. That's how it is with God's love, once you've experienced it, you spread the love to everyone, and you want to pass it on.”

Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear, things that still thrill me and remind me he is here.

It doesn't seem like much of a story but it is a powerful one. We are reminded to throw another log on the fire of our faith and let the fire grow in order to attract those who need the warmth and the light of Jesus. Remember we have the Good News in a world that is filled with bad news. It promises new life that is far better than our old sinful life. The story is this...God gave us his son that whosoever believes in him could have eternal life.

May our prayer today be, 'Breathe on me breath of God, fill me with
life anew.' Amen!