

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5
"Preach the Word"
Pentecost 19 (Proper 24C)

October 19, 2025
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.
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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul writes to Timothy: ***"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the Word"*** (2 Timothy 4:1-2a).

Today's text seems pretty simple. It explains itself. What more could I even say to this fantastic text? After all, there is a reason this text is always proclaimed at pastoral ordinations and installations. This text appears to have everything we need to hear when it comes to the importance of the Bible and for what the Bible is used for.

So, what is the importance of the Bible? Well, it is a unique collection of books, because each book contained in the Bible is "God-breathed." What makes the Holy Scriptures so important is that they and they alone reveal the way of salvation, which is through faith in Jesus Christ alone. No other book on earth so articulately proclaims the truth of yours and my salvation.

The Bible is also unique in that it was written by men through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So, when you read God's Word, you are reading words that are divinely inspired. You are reading the very Word of God. So, if you ever wonder what God thinks, just open up your Bible and read.

You see, it is the Holy Spirit who brought about these writings. They were willed by God and determined by God. The Holy Spirit moved the writers to write in the way they did for these Scriptures are truly the very Word of God.

St. Peter wrote: ***"No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"*** (2 Peter 1:20-21).

And since the Bible is the very Word of God, it contains not a single error. The words contained from Genesis to Revelation contain no errors, since God is incapable of ever making a single mistake.

Since God's Word is true, it is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that we would be complete and equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Holy Spirit forms us through God's written Word. He gives us knowledge. He calls us to repentance over sin. He corrects us through the Word. He trains us through discipline and instruction as we live out the Christian life in repentance and faith.

Each written word in the Scriptures was inspired by the Holy Spirit for our benefit. So may we so hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life through our Lord Jesus Christ!

But there's a problem. Now, there's no problem with the Bible. The problem is with you and me.

St. Paul writes to Timothy: ***“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths”*** (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

“For the time is coming.” Here, Paul is looking to the future, a future for which Paul wants to prepare Timothy. Paul is preparing Timothy for the bad times to come. A future in which is our reality today.

For the time is coming when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but will listen to their itching ears for what they want to hear. This time is today.

Here, Paul is distinguishing between what people need to hear and what people want to hear. What people need to hear is “sound doctrine.” It is sound because it is what God wants said. “Sound doctrine” comes from God, and it produces spiritual health.

But ever since the Fall of Adam, humanity has tried to usurp control over God's Word. Satan inferred that God was lying to Adam and Eve, so they tried to take control to be *“like God”* even though they were already made in His image. All they did was lose God's likeness when they ate of the forbidden fruit. Likewise, the children of Israel also complained, criticized and condemned the Lord.

We are not too different from our ancestors who nagged and nitpicked God's grace. Yours and my sinful nature would rather not put up with sound doctrine, because it does not say what we want to hear. It's because sound doctrine exposes our sin and proclaims condemnation. Sound doctrine does not flatter us with a recital of what great things we have done. So much of God's sound doctrine does not make sense to our human reason.

So, what does sinful humanity do? It does what sinful humanity has always done. It will look for teachers who *“suit their own passions”* by turning *“away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths”* (2 Timothy 4:3, 4).

So, we look for teachers and preachers who will scratch our itching ears. We become cats or dogs looking for a good scratch. So, we look for teachers and preachers who flatter our egos, who gives credit to man, who satisfies our natural desires and lusts, who preaches to human reason, who reinterpret Scripture to correspond to human reason.

And whenever the Church blesses what God condemns, it stops being the voice of Christ. It becomes an echo chamber of the fallen world. You see, the Gospel calls sinners out of darkness, it does not hold the sinner's hand in that darkness and encourage the sinner to remain in darkness.

But Jesus welcomed everyone, pastor! Yes, He did. But He never left anyone unchanged. And that's the point. He welcomed an adulterous woman, but He said, *“Go, and sin no more!”* (John 8:11). He dined with tax collectors, but He called them to leave behind their thievery. You see, grace does not re-write sin. Grace redeems the sinner from sin. But sinful man cannot bear this tension. It wants acceptance without repentance; affirmation without transformation.

The message goes from take up your cross to drop the cross, because God wants you to be yourself because He made you that way. It goes from repent and believe to affirm and belong.

Actual compassion tells the sinner when he is sinning. Actual compassion admits the log in your own eye, because you want to remove the splinter in your neighbor's eye.

Jesus did not die to validate all sinful desires. Jesus wasn't crucified so that we could all remain in sin. Jesus died to crucify our sinful desires; those desires of the flesh. And Jesus sent the Holy Spirit so that we would not give in to the desires of the flesh.

Today, there are so many ear-scratching teachers and preachers at churches that once proclaimed sound doctrine, but are now teaching what God's Word so plainly and repeatedly condemns, such as sexual immorality and women's ordination.

God never gave His Church any authority to redefine sin. Christ is still the ruler of His Church. He doesn't call on pastors to make new rules. His pastors are to simply be His servants as we go about doing what He has said. So, when you hear things like, "We must listen to the spirit of our age," always remember that the Holy Spirit literally inspired men to write the very Word of God. The Bible was written by God. And He is not going to move in the spirit to our modern age, which is different from the way He wrote the Bible.

In short, these ear-scratching teachers and preachers preach anything except God's revealed truth. So, they will *never* expose sin and *never* lead the sinner to any godly change.

Thanks be to God that you are here! So, you are like Timothy. Now, you are not a pastor, like me, but you are still like Timothy, because you have not given up. You are enduring. Paul writes to Timothy: "***But as for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry***" (2 Timothy 4:5).

Here, Paul is encouraging Timothy and us, so that we are able to continue in faith as we "***continue in what [we] have learned and have firmly believed***" – that is, "***the sacred writings, which are able to make [us] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus***" (2 Timothy 3:14-15). Being encouraged, we do as Paul encouraged Timothy: we preach the Word.

You see, Jesus has commissioned all of us to make disciples of all nations by teaching all that He has commanded us. He has called us to speak of the hope we have in Christ Jesus to all who have ears to hear.

Now, it is true that we have different emphases on this calling. For I have been given the authority to preach and teach through my calling as an ordained servant of the Word. But you, too, have a similar calling. Yes, I am to proclaim God's Word publicly. But you have a role, too, as you proclaim your faith through your various God-given vocations in life as father or mother, brother or sister, educator or student, boss or employee, friend and neighbor.

But you may say? It's not the right time. To that, God's Word says: It's always the right time. It's always a good time to proclaim the Word. In season or out of season, because God's Word is always in season.

We preach the Word, because His Word will not return to God empty. For He proclaims: ***“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it”*** (Isaiah 55:10-11).

This Word is Jesus Christ. He is the One who suffered, died, rose, and ascended to save us from our sinful self, the devil, and this fallen world. So, we preach Christ crucified. For the One who said, ***“Father, forgive them”*** (Luke 23:34) forgave us.

We preach the Word, because Jesus Christ is that very human divine Word of salvation. Jesus is our foundation, our focus and our source of forgiveness. Amen.

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*
+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +