

11.19.23 – Pentecost 25
“Paul’s Gratitude: Holy Teaching”
The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

Psalm 106:1-3, 47-48 (NIV)

¹ Praise the Lord.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

² Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord
or fully declare his praise?

³ Blessed are those who act justly,
who always do what is right.

⁴⁷ Save us, Lord our God,
and gather us from the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.

⁴⁸ Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.

Let all the people say, “Amen!”
Praise the Lord.

Leader: These Words of Praise Are of God! All: Thanks be to God!

2 Timothy 3:10-17 (NLT)

Paul’s Charge to Timothy

¹⁰ But you, Timothy, certainly know what I teach, and how I live, and what my purpose in life is. You know my faith, my patience, my love, and my endurance. ¹¹ You know how much persecution and suffering I have endured. You know all about how I was persecuted in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra—but the Lord rescued me from all of it. ¹² Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ¹³ But evil people and impostors will flourish. They will deceive others and will themselves be deceived.

¹⁴ But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. ¹⁵ You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

Leader: These Words of the Apostle Paul Are from God. All: Thanks be to God!

Please pray with me:

Faithful God, help us to remember our legacy of faith, your teachings, and your confidence in us, despite burdens and temptations. As we prepare for the thanksgiving holiday, be with us in Scripture and Prayer as we remember those not

with us this year. Help us to honor you first and our loving Godly relationships with friends and family. Help us to share our resources with others, especially the good news of your salvation. We worship and praise you for your eternal love and mercy. As we close out our study of the Pastoral Letters, we thank you again for Paul's courageous ministry and encouragement to his apprentice, Timothy. May his words encourage us to commit to Bible study, pressing on in all forms of ministry. Speak to us as we hear your Words and your voice through this servant. Amen.

This was another tough week in our church, and because of our faith and relationships, we made it through. We were good soldiers, so to speak. This week, we heard a psalm of praise even if we don't feel much like praising, and we heard again from the premier soldier of Christ, the apostle Paul. There is more of Timothy to read, so please continue, but this is the last passage for us to study, because, can you believe it, it's Thanksgiving and almost Advent?!

This psalm, though praising God, tells a history of Israel's rebelliousness. It is believed to be David's praise of God's protection as he ran from Saul who hunted him. The verses I selected are almost a call to worship and a benediction, appropriate for any Sunday. It is a confessional psalm, tracing the transgressions and God's judgment on the people. The psalmist requests God free the captives, wherever they are. He praises God's goodness, love, and power, appropriate for our upcoming holiday of Thanksgiving. According to Wikipedia and what we learned in school:

the event that Americans commonly call the 'first Thanksgiving' was celebrated by the Pilgrims after their first harvest in the New World in November 1621. This feast lasted three days and was attended by 90 Native American Wampanoag people and 53 survivors of the Mayflower (Pilgrims). Less widely known is an earlier Thanksgiving

celebration in Virginia in 1619 by English settlers who had just landed at Berkeley Hundred aboard the ship Margaret.

Because the early settlers were religious, I don't know for sure but imagine there were some scriptures of praise read aloud that day in gratitude. The writer of Psalm 106 continues to pray for God's deliverance of those who had scattered running away from Saul, hence the phrase, "gather from the nations." We can interpret that to mean gathering the family members scattered around the country and the world, as so many people travel. Pray for their safe travels and salvation as you study this psalm.

Our main focus today is 2 Timothy and Paul's continued instruction of his young apprentice. Paul warned him that times were changing, and people were becoming self-centered and narcissistic. Though Paul was in prison in Rome, his time in Ephesus had shown him that the weak-willed had become gullible to the false teachers rising in popularity. They were corrupt and depraved men teaching a mixture of philosophy and paganism that sounded a little like the gospel. Doesn't that sound a little like today's cultural climate?

Paul reminds him that he, Timothy, though young in his ministry, is aptly qualified to dispute these false claims, because Paul himself taught and prepared him to carry on his work, to live the life of Christ, continuing a Godly and faithful focus on morality and the Holy Scriptures. Paul thanked God for the usefulness of God's Word in Scripture. He praised God for equipping his young protégé and was grateful for Timothy's commitment to God's teaching, depending on the Scriptures to supply all his needs as an apostle and missionary.

The words discussing the false teachers as evil men and imposters refer to magicians and sorcerers, specifically Egyptian magic makers. Defending oneself was not as effective as avoiding them entirely, but Paul knew that God's word would fortify Timothy enough to build walls of protection around him. His best weapon was the "sacred writings" passed down through the disciples, Timothy's maternal line, and Paul's personal experience with Christ in his life. The term "sacred writings" refers to the Christian notes and oral history, but also to the Old Testament Scriptures handed down and now so well-known and interpreted through a risen Christ perspective.

We've read in Paul's other letters how grateful he was that he received Christ's forgiveness for his early life's sinfulness. In a way, he was also grateful for his life experiences, even punishments and the three shipwrecks! Now that's gratitude we should imitate. In this letter, Paul is also grateful for Timothy's calling and ministry; this man is a man of God so fortified to transmit God's word for the salvation of others, to continue the work of Jesus Christ and Paul, bringing good news to the poor and release to the captives as prophesied in Isaiah 42:7, 61:1 and Luke 4:18 about the incarnated Jesus' purpose on earth. Paul reminds Timothy not to be afraid because he has been made complete and well equipped to carry on Paul's work. As are we, actually. Do you believe that?

What do we have to be thankful for in these troubled times? Our very lives, the breath we breathe, the clothes we wear, food we eat, fresh water, mobility, shelter, but especially all the things we've been studying and hearing about in Sunday's messages: we should be most grateful for God's divine love, strength, healing, provision, power, inspiration,

scripture, direction, and legacy of those who went before us. The Scriptures teach and reteach Jesus' lessons, mission, and lifestyle. His example is clearly seen through his life, ministry, and short, meaningful history. Jesus was and is through the Holy Spirit the ultimate example of goodness, light, kindness, servanthood, yet leadership, and sacrifice.

As we celebrate various traditions of Thanksgiving, let us remember Paul's instructions to young Timothy to carry on his ministry, no matter what chronological age. That applies to us too. Remember as you reflect on those who taught you life lessons and faith to thank God for them. Without the instruction, encouragement, and beauty of Scripture, it would be difficult to remain faithful, so as you say grace, remember those influential saints who make up that great "cloud of witnesses" in your life. We have so much because Christ gave so much. Our first thanks as believers should be a bit different than those early settlers; we should give thanks to our Lord and Savior, preachers and teachers of the Word, our parents who gave us biological life, siblings who shared it, children, grandchildren, great grands, spouses, and friends who enrich our lives, the Words of Scripture (God-breathed and inspired to equip his disciples), and finally, for the work of ministry itself, its challenges, risks, and eternal rewards. May we be committed and worthy to serve others in gratitude and thanksgiving as Jesus, Paul, and Timothy did. Amen? Amen! //

Please pray with me. Precious Lord and Savior, we thank you for all you provide us, especially the compelling words of Scripture. Help us to affirm the teachers and preachers among us. Help us to share your good news and loving mercy with those who need you. Let us be more

grateful for the many gifts your salvation brings both on earth and in heaven. May we study more deeply the Scriptures, praying and listening for your direction, encouraging one another and those we encounter daily. It is in your Son, Jesus' name we pray, **Amen.**