

Guarding What Has Been Entrusted

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[0 : 00] Our God and Father, that you will open your word to our hearts and our heart to your word. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. The passage we're looking at this morning is 1 Timothy, chapter 6, and it's in your pew Bible on page 197, page 197, 1 Timothy, chapter 6.

We are, as a parish, in a very busy time of the year, and things can easily get confused and values and priorities messed up.

But I think we have a responsibility to listen and to take responsibility. We had a church committee meeting the other night, and two members of the church committee are going to tell you a little bit about our financial situation at the announcement time today, and it's important that you should listen to them carefully.

A lot of people are hurting in the parish. The big disadvantage that we have, I think, is that there's so much activity that is church-centered that it's hard to get out to homes.

And most people, when they start to suffer, don't get out to church very much. And we have to get out to them in a more consistent way. I speak of myself, but I think all of us must share the responsibility.

[1 : 48] And the fact that we're planning a visitation program in November is part of that, but on a weekly basis we need to be reaching out to people in our parish who, through illness or through unemployment or through depression or all sorts of things, sometimes lose touch.

And though they lose touch with us, we mustn't lose touch with them. And we need to be responsible for them. It's easy to disappear in this congregation.

The third thing I want to mention just before I begin is the Learner's Exchange started this morning in the parish hall.

And we are very privileged as a congregation to have such resources in the congregation that such a program can be put on. And I think we all need to take advantage of it.

We suffer from just having too much as a parish, but we've got to be good stewards of it and to take advantage of what we have. And the Learner's Exchange is important.

[3 : 03] Following the service this morning, there's going to be an epilogue, as happens on the fourth Sunday of each month. This is a service for prayer and for the laying on of hands. We invite anybody with particular concerns for themselves or for people near them to come and to join in that service and to pray for others and to be prayed for yourself as you have need.

So that'll happen ten minutes after the service is over. We'll start in the chapel. So now we look at 1 Timothy chapter 6.

And in order to break it down, because there's a tremendous content in this chapter, and I can only lead you through it in a kind of cursory way, I think, but nevertheless I want to do that.

And I decided that we should start with God. Seems a good place to start. And if you look at verse 15, you will see that Paul sort of almost spontaneously breaks into a doxology to praise God.

And he writes to Timothy in this letter, Timothy, who is the minister of the church at Ephesus, and he says, he talks about the blessed and only sovereign, the king of kings, the lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen, to him be honor and eternal dominion.

[4 : 53] Amen. The wonder of the fact that our lives are centered in God, it's only for us, I suppose, and perhaps in quite a vicious and malignant kind of way that we have moved away from knowing God or publicly acknowledging God.

We don't do it. Yet at the heart of Paul's letter to Timothy is this paean of praise to the one who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, who is sovereign, lord of lords, and king of kings.

And the centrality of God in our lives is the only thing that makes sense of our lives. And when we have lost that, we have lost everything.

I mean, I think we are lost. And this God has made himself known to us. And it is our duty. I mean, I don't want to say duty because it's far more than that.

It's the very core of our life that we should be in touch with that God. And we have lost touch with him through our self-sufficiency, through our arrogance.

[6 : 19] All those things have happened to us because of the tremendous achievements of the 20th century, the tremendous buildup of knowledge. We are a people who don't know God.

Well, that's the one that we are to know when Paul wonderfully describes him in that verse. The second person that I want you to look at is Jesus Christ.

And you find a reference to him again in verse 13 of chapter 6, Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession.

Now, what Jesus did when he came into the world, he came into the world to bear witness to the truth about God.

And for this, he was crucified. He made a good confession. He was the first, in a sense, of the Christian martyrs, if you want, who pointed to the truth and died for it.

[7 : 30] And it is our responsibility, as those who profess the name of Christ, that our responsibility is to point toward the truth of God as he has made himself known to us in the scriptures.

God of God, King of Kings, Lord of Lords. When Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate and Pontius Pilate said to him, Do you not know that I have the power to crucify you when I have the power to release you?

Jesus said, You have no power at all. Because power doesn't belong to you. And we have to stand before our society and our world that is on a power trip and say, You have no power at all over me or over anything else.

Because power doesn't belong to you. It belongs to him who is King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and dwells in unapproachable light. Well, we've had God, we've had Jesus Christ.

There's nine of these, by the way, so we've got a little way to go. The third person I want you to look at is the man of God. And you see him in verse 11, and he is, this is Timothy that Paul is addressing, and he says, But as for you, man of God.

[8 : 57] And the man of God has this responsibility. He is to aim at righteousness, flee from false teaching, fight the good fight, of which we've just sung a hymn to encourage one another in that same battle, and to take hope on eternal life.

In a sense, to make his confession of the truth. Confession here doesn't mean your secret sins, but your deepest convictions that you express.

You're to get hold of what you believe most deeply about God, and you are to confess it before men. And once you do that, you will be in trouble in our kind of world.

I can guarantee it to you. It's just as sure as anything. That's why we don't do it for the most part, I expect. But as a man of God or a woman of God, like Timothy, you have in some measure the responsibility that your aim is straight, that you run away from things that need to be run away from.

We think we can put up with all sorts of nonsense, but we can't, because false teaching is treated in this chapter as disease.

[10 : 28] It's like a virus, a flu virus, if you want, and if you know somebody that has it, you avoid them. And where there is false teaching, Paul says to Timothy, the only way you can handle it is not go in and try and deal with it, because you'll become infected with it.

So you're to run away from it. You're to fight the good fight, which means that you are engaged in a battle with evil, and it will win, or you will win, depending on the fight.

And that you are to take hold of eternal life, because that's what God has called you to. Most of us hold on frantically to this life, which is like holding on to a shredded rag doll.

It's not very significant. But Paul says to Timothy, hold on to eternal life. That's what needs to take hold of you, and you need to take hold of.

God, Jesus Christ, the man of God. And I want you to look at the man who is subject to the false teaching, and he is the bereft man, the man in mourning.

[11 : 44] And you'll see him in verse 4. You see the results of the false teaching, and we're coming to the false teacher in a minute, but this is the man who has been subjected to this false teaching.

And it says that it produces in, sorry, it's verse 5 I'm looking at. It's the man who is bereft of truth.

That is, there's been a death in the family. In his life now, death has taken hold of truth, and there is no living truth for him any longer.

He is bereft of truth. He has been bereaved. And he imagines that godliness is a means of gain. I almost would like to avoid that little concept, but it is so prevalent that we gain something by godliness in terms of material prosperity, in terms of happiness on this earth, that somehow God goes around giving out stars.

But he doesn't. He, it's tough. And you can see from the rest of the chapter how difficult it is. And people who come to church because they think that they're gaining something through their godliness are, it's what it says, they're bereft of the truth.

[13 : 15] And they imagine, they have their imagination filled with falsehood. So that's the bereft man.

Then you come next in this to the contented man. And this is the man in verse 6. There is great gain in godliness with contentment.

Now the contented man has come to grips with certain realities. about life. First, that he brought nothing into this life and he's not going to carry anything out.

And that's a great relief. That you can't take it with you because it's heavy. And so that's the first thing the contented man has.

Nothing in and nothing out. Food and clothing are sufficient. Remember, this is a congregation of slaves who have nothing and rich men who have a great deal.

[14 : 22] And he says to them both, you brought nothing in, you'll take nothing out. Food and clothing are all that you require. And in this you are to find contentment.

You remember in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 25, you will remember it when you hear the words. I'm sure those numbers mean nothing to you. But in verse 625 of Matthew, Jesus touches on the same thing when he says, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on.

Those are the sources of our discontent. discontent. And it is, it is, it's the engine of our economy to stir up our discontent.

But there is a man who can be contented and these are the conditions. Nothing in, nothing out. Food and clothing is all that he requires. The thing that tears him apart is his desire to be rich.

And you see what happens to him if you look at this because in verse 9, those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, a snare, senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

[15 : 43] For the love of money is the root of all evils. Well, you know, if we were to look at our own congregation, what conclusion would we come to? The first conclusion you could come to is that you're all very rich.

You may think you're an exception to that, but I'll argue with you about it afterwards if you want. You're all very rich. But one of the ways in which we are not rich in our society is that we count it all as being relative.

And we all tend to be afflicted with a desire to be rich. Richer than we are. And that desire consumes so much of our energy.

and blinds us to what God has wonderfully provided for us, which should prove to be the basis of our contentment. That's the contented man.

And you have the passage ends with what happens is that through these cravings, some have wandered away from the faith, pierced their hearts with many pangs.

[16 : 54] You see, what happens through this desire, this longing, this craving, is that you go away from faith, from the aim, which is righteousness, and the...

you stop running away from false teaching. We get constantly bombarded with false teaching.

We fail in our fighting of the good fight, the good fight, and we fail to take hold of eternal life. So anxious are we to grasp the uncertain riches.

In our lives, therefore, Paul says to Timothy, if people get caught in that trap, their hearts will be pierced through with many pains of remorse and conscience.

And so, we have to be careful about that. The next person I want you to look at is the false teacher. And this comes remarkably close to the person in the pulpit.

[18 : 08] But that's where he's liable to be. So I warn you, as you read this, what happens to people who, look in verse 3, if anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching which accords with godliness.

When it says sound words, this is where the idea of teaching which is disease. disease, you are diseased by false teaching. And there are lots of people that I meet in the course of a week who are very seriously diseased by false teaching.

It is really, it's just taken hold of them and their life expectancy is greatly shortened simply because they have this disease and it comes from the false teacher and the false teacher is himself diseased and he spreads the disease.

Look at him in verse 4, what a caricature. He is puffed up with conceit, he knows nothing, he has a morbid craving for controversy and for dispute about words which produce envy, dissension, slander, base suspicion and wrangling among the bereft men who imagine that godliness is a means of gain, that religion is a profitable business to be involved in.

So you have this terrible picture of the false teacher. His person is puffed up and his, the fruit of his teaching is an unwholesome stinking thing, putrid and has about it the odor of death and yet so many of us get caught in false teaching.

[20 : 07] the next person, we're almost there, three more to go, the Christian slave in verses 1 and 2, the Christian slave of which perhaps a large part of the congregation in Ephesus was made up of slaves.

Now slaves are easy to incite into rebellion and you may remember that one of the great political ideologies of our day is that man is born in chains or in slavery and needs to be set free.

Now I don't know what you make of this but when Paul writes to Timothy in a culture that was marked by slavery, he said that the function of slaves, and he was very clear and specific about it, is to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

If in the course of this world you are a slave in any way whatever, you are to use that position not to incite rebellion but to serve the cause of the kingdom of God and if your master happens, you have to serve your master in such a way as you will confess the faith before him.

If your master happens to be a Christian, you are to treat him with all due honor and respect because he is a Christian and you serve his purposes as a Christian by serving him.

[21 : 45] Now, that wouldn't be, I guess, very popular teaching in our society but there it is and that's what Paul said to Timothy and I'm sure there is a profound lesson for us to learn.

Something so profound that it could well undermine a lot of current and contemporary thinking if we could hear it as the word of God to us and not just an attempt to impose an ancient culture on a modern and sophisticated world.

After the Christian slave, the other end of that congregation is the rich man and he's in verse 17 and notice that the rich man is not a man who desires to be rich, who is driven by this craving.

He's already got it in the bank and so his situation is somewhat different and so he is to, he is given specific instructions.

He has wealth and so he's to be told not to be haughty, which one of the old commentaries says he's not to have pride of purse.

[23 : 01] You have pride of purse. In other words, when you roll out your credit cards do they go from here to the floor? I guess that's pride of purse, I don't know.

But he's not to be haughty. He's to, it's a lovely picture. He's not to set his hope on uncertain riches because any earthly riches is by definition uncertain and is written up in the business section of the Globe and Mail every day to remind you how uncertain it is.

he's to recognize that his true wealth is in God. You see, and so his hope is to be on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy.

The things from which he can really find enjoyment and in which he can really find enjoyment are not his wealth, which is really an onerous responsibility. The thing that has really impressed me with coming to St. John Shaughnessy is that people with a lot of money have to be highly disciplined simply to manage it.

It takes an awful lot of their time and energy. And so it's lovely that they need to be reminded that they are to set their hopes not on their uncertain riches which are so demanding, but on God who richly furnishes them as us all with everything to enjoy.

[24 : 34] goes on to give further instructions to them and says to them they are to do good, they are to be rich in good deeds, that is their wealth allows them to do that as others are not allowed to do it.

They have that privilege and that's how they're to exercise it. They are to be liberal. Now that of course requires some kind of redefinition.

And the redefinition which the commentators give is that they are to be very generous whenever they have occasion to be, they are to be as generous as possible.

And then the word which is here and says generous I think has something to do with they are to use their homes, their family, their situation to build up the community and the fellowship of the Christian community.

In other words they have that special opportunity to exercise hospitality and to build up the community and that's to be their special responsibility in this catalog.

[25 : 48] So you have them all and you finally come to Timothy himself and Paul ends his letter by saying oh Timothy. Timothy this is what you're to do.

You're to guard the gospel. The thing that has to remain central to the life of the church in Ephesus is the gospel. And Timothy you are to guard it with everything you have.

The thing that can undermine the gospel Paul says is godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.

There is nothing like the gospel. You just have to pronounce it someplace and there is a wave of godless chatter that comes around you all the time.

I see it over and over again that an inundating wave of godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.

[26 : 54] It happens again and again and it could sweep you away. You try and talk about the gospel and you watch the junk that comes up by way of rebuttal, by way of questioning.

Now there are valid questions. I'm not denying that. But for the most part it's just old godless chatter and stuff that is falsely called knowledge.

And the result of this is that some miss the gospel altogether. They miss the mark as regards the faith. They don't know what the faith is all about.

They have been swept away by godly chatter and what is falsely called knowledge. And that needs to be avoided at all costs, Paul says to Timothy.

So I leave you with this passage and with all these characters. With God himself who is wonderfully described, with Jesus Christ bearing witness to the truth, with the man of God who is fighting the good faith, with the bereft man who is bereft of the truth and thinks that godliness is a means of gain, the false teacher who is puffed up with conceit, the contented man who isn't caught in a craving for riches, the slave who is called upon to serve the kingdom of God and not the kingdom of men by adorning the doctrine of Christ by his life, the rich man who is to, who is in the midst of his riches to take hold of that which God gives, which is the source of his joy and gladness, and Timothy, who in the midst of this all has the commission and the appointment to guard the gospel.

[29 : 01] We have all those people in our congregation. Chapter 6 will help you to understand them and to know how to deal with them.

And it may even be time for you to find yourself in one category and consider the possibility of changing to another. And so with those nine people, I commend to you the study of 1 Timothy chapter 6.

Look at them for yourselves. Amen.