

## **Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, July 9, 2023 – Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam**

To him who loved us and freed us from our sins by his own blood and made us a kingdom and priests to God his Father—to him be glory and the power forever!

Our text this morning was the epistle lesson last Sunday as we defined a Christian as someone who loves God above all.

**1 Timothy 6:11-16** <sup>11</sup> *But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.* <sup>12</sup> *Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.* <sup>13</sup> *In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you* <sup>14</sup> *to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,* <sup>15</sup> *which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,* <sup>16</sup> *who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever.*

In last week's Gospel reading Jesus made some radical statements. The word radical means "out of the ordinary" or "something unexpected". Listen to Jesus again from Matthew chapter 10: <sup>34</sup> "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— <sup>36</sup> a man's enemies will be the members of his own household. That's not something that we expect to hear from the Savior of all people. But Jesus was illustrating the point that a Christian when he puts God above everything else may easily run into conflicts with others even members of his own family.

In our text this morning as Paul writes to his former student and now his co-worker, who was the spiritual head of the churches in and around Ephesus also says some radical things. He is urging Timothy and us to listen to:

### **A CALL FOR RADICAL COMMITMENT**

- I. Leave the world's values
- II Follow the eternal light.

Did you catch what Paul calls Timothy? He wrote, "But you, man of God." He doesn't mean that Timothy had some special relationship to God, different from other Christians. He simply means that Timothy belongs to God. He is one bought by the blood of Christ. His baptism was a reminder that God had called him to faith. He had confessed his faith at his baptism.

With three radical expressions, Paul urges Timothy to a continuing commitment. The first is "Flee from all this." In the paragraph just before these verses Paul warned Timothy about greed and focusing on money and possessions above God. He had written, "Godliness with contentment is great gain . . . the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." The call for radical commitment means that we will step away from the attitude of the world around us as it focuses on possessions and investment accounts and exotic vacations and keeping up with the neighbors and others in the family. This is radical because it isn't what the world does. It is exactly what the devil and our own sinful flesh want us to do. So be a radical—use wisely the possession and money that God has given you through work and inheritance, but keep God and his will for us as your to priority.

In verse twelve Paul told Timothy to "Fight the good fight of faith." Yes we are involved in a war against everything that opposes Christian faith and life. Faith is fear, love and trust in God above all things. Faith is believing the trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Faith builds itself on the full truth reveal in the Holy Scriptures. The opponents in this fight are worthy adversaries, who are not easily defeated and always seem to arise with new vigor when we defeat them. We

are talking about the evil three--the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh. This fight is an everyday, life-long struggle. We heard Paul in the epistle lesson today say that the good he knows he should be doing he doesn't do and the evil that he knows is wrong that he keeps on doing. Can we claim to be any different? This call to radical commitment means that we won't go along with world around us as it choose to pervert God's will for his creation. We will listen to what he tells us in Scripture what to believe and how to live. We will be willing to judge all the ethics and attitudes and actions of this world according to Scripture. We will not take up the morals of the people around us when they contradict what God tells us in the Ten Commandments. By doing this the world may judge us s radical and give us some label that they consider demeaning.

Paul's third radical recommendation to Timothy is found in verses 13 and 14: "*In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame*". Wow! We have to say! Without spot or blame—that is impossible! That's what makes this so radical. By ourselves it is impossible, but armed with the resources that God gives to his people, this is our goal. When we use the weapons that he supplies, namely the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, we are equipped for keeping this radical commitment. We can say to the devil and his minions, just as Jesus said, "*It is written.*" And yet that without spot or blame bit still eludes us. Here comes another radical part of making the Lord God number one in our hearts and lives—the Lord Jesus Christ still loves us and his blood wash us clean from sin and guilty. Even though we have not been without spot and blame, the righteous Judge in heaven sees us without spot or blame because he sees us through the perfect life of Jesus our Savior. Jesus lived that holy life as our substitute.

This call to radical commitment is a call to leave the world's values and follow the eternal light. Listen again to the final four verses of the section: "*In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you <sup>14</sup> to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup> which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, <sup>16</sup> who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever.*" Jesus now lives in eternal, unapproachable light. In the Old Testament lesson this morning God told Moses that he couldn't see God because God is holy and Moses was a sinner. But that light lights the way to heaven. That Light is the way to heaven. Keeping our hearts and minds and lives focused on Jesus is radical according to "wisdom" of our times. When we say that Jesus is true God and the only way to eternal life the world will not accept our faith. We may even be persecuted and lose our earthly possessions, but this is a good kind of radical. It means following what Paul told Timothy at the beginning of this section: "*pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.*" By striving to live with these qualities, can follow the eternal light. Finally he will lead us to that eternal dwelling where we will see God face to face, for we will be perfect.

It probably isn't something your mother encouraged you to do, but Paul urges us to be radicals. Listen to this call to radical commitment. Amen.

Pastor Joel Jaeger  
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