**2 Tim 3:14-17, 4:1-5**

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it **15** and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16**  All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. 4:**1**  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: **2** preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. **3**  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, **4** and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. **5** As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

**“Wrestling With The Word”**

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Safety is in high demand now days. Businesses try to sell it as a product to buy. The news reports on how it is constantly at risk. Plenty make safety a way of life preparing for the worst. Anxiety is high among Americans. Yet, how can this be? We live in the safest place on earth. Our military keeps peace here and around the world. Our society is hardier than a government shutdown. Our lives enjoy freedoms that most will never have. Struggles challenge our need for safety, but safety without struggle. Well, that may mean no one is safe.

When St. Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy. He was far from safe in worldly terms. This apostle was sitting in prison at Rome. The officials had slapped him on the hand the first time for preaching the Gospel. Now this second time around was not going to turn out the same way. St. Paul could see the end, so he wrote a final letter to Timothy. They had met on his second missionary journey. Timothy came from a mixed religious family. “The son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek” (Acts 16:1). Paul and him became close over the years. The letter of 2 Timothy was a kind of safety net. Paul tells Timothy what God expects of pastors. This standard remains unchanged for our churches. It all comes down to a basic belief. Wrestling with the Word keeps us safe in Jesus.

There was plenty for Timothy to struggle over with Paul in prison. Questions over the future direction of the church. Questions over his own strength without Paul. Questions over why God allowed such a struggle. St. Paul did not rest on the safety of his situation. What made him content at all times is what he confessed 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; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” Safety rested on the Word. Both to admonish the erring and comfort those in need. The teaching of Scripture gave faith to sinners. It came with long-suffering, since the power to save is only in what God says.

The Word is a ready defense. We have been given this life of safety by faith in Jesus. He is the Word that already defends sinners. His death and resurrection holds us to what God says. St. Peter proclaims, “And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts…” (2 Peter 1:19). What arises is the gift of faith in Jesus. The preached Word has power to give life. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness…” This is the teaching from God able to speak to our sins. It corrects our false ideas that stand against God. It comforts our despair with the One who can never die again. The purpose is to receive the life we have defended for us by faith in Jesus.

There is a danger against this preached Word. St. Paul was fully aware of it as an apostle. After his departure, it would only become more threatening to Timothy. Safety in Christ was never so safe as if there was not a struggle. He told him, “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.” These were passions not like the passion of Jesus built on His sacrifice for sinners. Rather, these were desires to satisfy the sinful heart built on selfishness. A false life only flows out of false teaching. It turns away to no longer tolerate what God says. This leads to wandering like a drunk person unable to stay on the road. All sorts of fantasies arise that are just plain unhealthy to faith in Jesus.

The warning by Paul is not over something in the culture. Sadly, it is what would show up in the church. The Word will be denied. This is preaching that gives us less than Jesus. It is for Him to neither save sinners nor to be Lord of our life. Our Lutheran Fathers faced this kind of crisis. They confessed, “…false teachers were also inflicted on our churches because of our own and the ungrateful world’s impenitence and sin”(Tappert 4:4). Their own sinful blindness brought the deception. This goes double for us these latter days. To stay on the road means the Word calls us back to Jesus. Matter a fact, praising the 95-Thesis typically misses the first thesis. Luther stated, “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, `Repent’ (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.” The printing press was a useful tool during the Reformation. Advancements in technology goes the same for us. However, Johannes Guttenberg also used his machine to print plenty of indulgences for profit. God can work through technology, but to worship technology is a false god. It has never saved a single soul. Only God’s Word speaks good news in Jesus for sinners.

Ears being scratched was noise pollution. Satan spoke similar words of poison to Adam and Eve. It was in that pleasurable question, “Did God really say?” Satan caused a struggle. Struggles question safety. God’s Word was safe, but our first parents wanted to feel safer. The sinful curse on humanity has lost all comfort. Yet, Jesus directs us back to trust God’s Word. He proclaims, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me…” (John 5:39V). Timothy was to remain with this Christ centered and cross-focused mission. St. Paul said, “As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” Rather than being swept away into securities that shut out the Gospel. Timothy was to preach the Word in all security even while suffering. Steadfastness toward the saving work and word of Jesus would not fail.

How much does the fear of failing plague us today? Heaven forbid to be found sinners by the Law. Heaven forbid our way of life is broken. Heaven forbid denying failure for false security. The faithfulness of God is what the baptized have received as a gift. There is both a promise and power in the Word. St. Paul told Timothy, “you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” Like Jacob wrestling with God, the Word of forgiveness comes as a blessing for the repentant. Like the persistent widow, how much more does Jesus give Himself in the Sacrament as the answer to those who cry to Him. Scriptures are to guide us in a right way of life, but it is always life as saved by Jesus. The Faithfulness of God is in His Word. We prayed today, “Mercifully grant that Your Holy Spirit may direct and govern our hearts in all things that we may persevere with steadfast faith in the confession of Your name” It all comes down to a basic belief. Wrestling with the Word keeps us safe in Jesus. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.