



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Understanding the New Testament The Pastoral Letters: 1&2 Timothy and Titus

*⁵ For there is one God;
there is also one mediator between God and humankind,
Christ Jesus, himself human,
⁶ who gave himself a ransom for all
—this was attested at the right time. ⁷ For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the
truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 1 Timothy 2:5-7 NRSV*

First and Second Timothy and Titus are often referred to as “The Pastoral Letters.” For the most part, the letters written by Paul and the letters written by imitators of Paul are directed to congregations. These three letters are, in form, letters from Paul to two of his pastors: Timothy and Titus.

There is almost unanimous agreement among scholars that these letters were not written by Paul, although most scholars do think they were all written by the same person. As elaborated upon below, these letters describe a Church that is developing a formal organization and seeking to keep itself together despite forces that would tend to pull it apart. The Greek used in the letters reflects a vocabulary used in the middle to late Second Century (150-200 CE) and its references to the “false teaching” being spread describes Gnosticism as it developed in the middle to late Second Century. Gnosticism, as it developed, emphasized complex mythologies and genealogies to support its theology. It also emphasized living an ascetic life. That is the type of teaching that the Pastorals warn against. See 1 Tim 1:4; 4:1-5; 6:1-5

The emphasis of the Pastorals is to insure that the teaching of the Church is not subverted and that the Church not be perceived in the community as a danger to public order. I tend to think of these letters as instructions to keep faithful but not to “rock the boat.” Controversial behavior is to be avoided so people don’t get the wrong impression of Christians. This emphasis is clearly seen at the beginning of Chapter 2 of 1st Timothy:

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. 1 Tim 2:1-2 NRSV

Similar is Titus 3:1-2:

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show every courtesy to everyone.

In 1 Corinthians Paul wrote of the danger to the Church posed by earthly powers and principalities. The writer of the Pastorals is focused upon the Church leading a “quiet and peaceful life” side by side with the earthly powers and principalities.

This focus on a quiet and peaceful life shows up in the writer’s description of the qualifications for leaders in the Church; Bishops and Deacons (there is also a reference to the Council of Elders.) This is another indication that these letters were written after Paul’s time. The Church has grown to such an extent that it has started to develop an organization. Some refer to this early church as the “proto-Orthodox” Church that eventually became the Roman Catholic Church. Bishops and Deacons must be men, married only once and persons who, among other things, “*must be above reproach, ... temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. 1 Tim 3:2-3 NRSV.*” In other words, choose as leaders those who will be respected within the Church **and** in the outside community as well. Don’t pick the trouble-makers, rock-throwers and extremists to lead your Church.

This emphasis on conforming to the customs of the surrounding society is also evident in what the writer has to say about women and slaves. Women are to remain silent, cannot be teachers and should submit to men as was expected in Roman society. They cannot be leaders of the church. Contrast this to the references in Romans 16 where Paul describes many women leaders of the Church including one he describes as an “Apostle.” Further evidence that this letter was not written by Paul is this statement about women and salvation:

¹⁵ *Yet she will be **saved through childbearing**, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty. 1 Timothy 2:15*

This statement flies in the face of everything the authentic letters of Paul say about salvation being based upon faith alone. Consider, for instance, these statements from Romans:

¹⁶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation **to everyone who has faith**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.” Romans 1:16-17 NRSV*

And

²⁸ *For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. Romans 3:28*

Similar affirmations of salvation through faith are to found throughout the authentic letters of Paul.

Another example of avoiding controversial conduct is the statements concerning slaves. Slaves were a central part of the economy of the Roman Empire and there was constant fear of the potential for slave rebellions. By encouraging that slaves be obedient to their masters the Church was discouraging conduct that might lead to persecution of the Church.

Having been quite critical of the Pastorals, it's fair to ask if I find the Gospel in these letters. In fact I do. Their emphasis upon right teaching and paying attention to doctrine is essential to our lives as the Body of Christ. We are not a social service organization but are rather a creation of God meant to serve in the world. If we pervert our doctrine or fail to teach our beliefs, we lose our way. That said, I am saddened by the harm done by these letters to the work of women in the church.

Next week: Paul's Letter to Philemon

Your Forehead is Dirty

*[A]ll have sinned— ...15 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.
Romans 5:12; 7:15*

I remember reading once that Billy Graham always made it a point to preach on Romans 5 whenever he held one of his crusades. At some point he would look at the crowd and pronounce, "All have sinned." He believed, quite correctly, that no one could realize the need for God in their life unless they acknowledged that they too were sinners; that they needed God. It's not the "unsaved" who need God. It's all of us.

In our society, Romans 5 is not a very popular passage. People don't like to think of themselves as sinners. Sin separates us from God and no one likes to think that they might be doing something that separates them from God. People prefer verses like John 3:16 (For God so loved the world...) or some other passage that isn't quite so honest and personal as Romans 5. But, Romans 5, and the follow-on in Romans 7, points up both the depth of God's love and the reason we need God in our lives. God loves the world, us and everyone else, in spite of our sin. God wants something better for us and is prepared to help us. Christianity is not about our independence or self-sufficiency. Christianity is based on the belief that we are dependent upon the sustaining power of God to live lives. Christianity assumes that we need God and one another to live full and productive lives. And our belief is that God reached out to us through Christ because of the sin that harms us and those around us. We profess that Christ provides the connection with God that bridges the separation caused by our sin. We don't need Christ as a good friend; we need Christ like we need the air we breathe.

The season of Lent begins on March 1st, Ash Wednesday. The Ash Wednesday service is a liturgy that Protestants have reclaimed in recent decades, recognizing that we need the symbol of the ashes to remind ourselves of our sin and our need for God. Ideally, an Ash Wednesday service should take place first thing in the morning so that the mark of the ashes is worn all day. I've never been very successful in getting people out for a service early on a Wednesday morning. However, we will have a service at 7:00 PM on Ash Wednesday for all who wish to come.

Prayerfully consider beginning the Lenten Season by receiving the mark of ashes. Accepting the mark of the ashes is a way of reminding ourselves that we need God in our lives. You see, even if we decline to receive the ashes, our foreheads are dirty.

The Journey to Easter

The first five Sundays in Lent I will offer a sermon series titled, “The Journey to Easter.” The series, based upon the Lectionary readings for those Sundays, will focus on our life journey as Disciples of Christ. I have also written a Lenten Study Guide for this series. The Adult Sunday School class will be using this study for the first five Sundays in Lent. For those not attending Sunday School, but who wish to use the guide, I have made it available on our web site in the Newsletter section.

Volunteer Opportunities

- Host for the Easter Egg Hunt. The hunt has been held the Saturday before Easter for the last couple of years. “Training” and some supplies are available for this event.....
- VBS director. It’s not too soon to start planning. The director will get to choose the VBS theme and date.
- Nursery level (pre-K) lesson plans coordinator. We have approximately 100 lessons and related crafts ready to use currently. Coordinator will need to refresh these periodically and be able to show others the set up.
- Wardrobe supervisor for the Christmas pageant. We have 70-80 costumes currently and have fabrics, patterns, etc. for several more. This role is about getting the costumes ready for the pageant as well as helping participants get “suited up”.

Preacher, What Does the Bible Say about ...?

From the time I came to Trinity I have stated on numerous occasions that I am willing to consider a sermon, or sermon series, on any subject that is of concern. If there is a subject upon which you would like me to preach I will consider it. If I do not think it appropriate for a sermon I will explain why. It might also be appropriate to address some issues as part of a Newsletter article or series or as part of the Sunday School curriculum. But, if at all possible, I will seek to speak to these issues that are of interest on Sunday morning. One purpose of worship is to contemplate our relationship with God and if something is bothering you it is likely bothering others as well.

Thursday Morning Bible Study

The Thursday Morning Bible Study Group meets weekly on Thursdays from 10:00 to 11:30 AM. We received two new members of the Group when we started up again after the Christmas holidays but there is room for more. We are currently studying Genesis.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons are part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard
Larry Eastwood
Leslie Eastwood

Rachel Newman
Kenneth Stevens
Patricia Stevens

Sam Richardson
Judy Richardson
Charles Wilson

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;
- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;
- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God's Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

Up-Coming Sermons

February 26th. Sermon: Start At The Foot of the Cross. The story of the Transfiguration is about the Glory of Christ. But it also contains a message for us. It reminds us that, to see Christ in Glory, we must start at the foot of the cross. To see Christ in Glory, we must first see Christ's suffering. My texts are Exodus 24:12-18 and Matthew 17:1-9.

March 5th. Sermon: The Journey to Easter: *Starting the Journey*. Our Discipleship Journey is about choices. In a sense, we are invited each day to start our journey as Disciples of Christ. My Texts are Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7 and Matthew 4:1-11.

Worship Leaders Schedule

February 26th

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**
Renita Hartsock and JoAnn Harper, **Greeters**
Greg and Sherry Locke, **Ushers**

March 5th

Gina Stewart, **Liturgist**
Pat Moran and Linda Robinson, **Greeters**
Hal and Rachel Newman, **Ushers**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Brittany Collom and Houston Hartsock will marry March 11 at 2:00 PM here at Trinity. All are invited to attend this wedding. The RSVP email address is hartsockwedding@gmail.com or tell Brittany or Houston of your plan to attend.

GraceWorks has a shortage on many items in our food pantry, and we need your help restocking it! Here is a list of some very critical items needed in our food pantry: **Critical Needs:** Canned green vegetables (not green beans), Canned beans, Canned meat (not tuna), Cereal, Hamburger Helper type boxed meals, Soup. Please support this important ministry with your regular donations. The box is located beside the side door.

Hosts and Hostesses for First Sunday Lunch: Please see the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. Please add your name to host this occasion for the coming months. There are a number of openings for volunteers.

The Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ Sunday School Class is both learning and enjoying a new discussion-based study. We are reading a book, "Ask." This book explores "faith questions in a skeptical age." We enjoy discussion about what we are reading and the application of the lessons to our lives. We enjoy fellowship beginning at 9:45 with our study beginning at 10:00. All are welcome to join us as we pursue Biblical truths and the application for our lives.

Birthdays in February

Donnie Hartsock, Joyce Edwards, Bert Winton, Maurice Edwards, Jeanne Rybolt, Patricia Stevens, Eric Crowell.

Happy Birthday to each of you!