

**Scripture Reading: I Timothy 4:6-16**

**“If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. 7 But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. 9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. 10 For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. 11 These things command and teach. 12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. 15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. 16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”**

## **"God's Call on Our Lives"**

**We have finished our long series on the Book of Genesis and last week I closed with a few general comments about that important book. So, this morning I want to take just a moment to speak about where we are going with the pulpit ministry here at Church of the King. Lord willing, Pastor Ben Alexander will continue to bring the Word about once a month and these will be topical sermons as he sees fit. Of course, in a few weeks the Advent season is upon us once again and our messages will focus on the coming of Jesus; His birth, His work, & ministry. By the later part of January, we will be ready for a new series and my plan at this point is to exegetically dig into the Epistle to the Ephesians and follow that up with a series on the Gospel According to John.**

**Pastor Alexander will be preaching next Lord's Day and that leaves us with a few Sundays before Advent. In the past on such occasions, I have tried to review the importance of our worship here at Church of the King to help instruct any new members and to remind all of us about why we do what we do each week in our worship service. I would like to do that again this year, but we are also coming up to the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation which is usually dated from the posting of the 95 Theses by Martin Luther on that church door at Wittenberg.**

**Now if we know our history well, we should remember that this quiet Monk posted those in an effort to begin a dialog about issues he was concerned about in the Catholic Church and it turned out to be quite a discussion! We heard about some of the historical background and courage of the men who lived at that time from Pastor Sumpter at Family camp so I would like to also honor their service to the Kingdom by working in some of their important contributions.**

- OF course in dealing with all of this I want to focus on what it should mean to us and perhaps even step on a few toes, including my own!**

**I want to encourage us to be more faithful as the Apostle Paul encouraged young Timothy in our morning text. That text will be the general theme for the messages that I will bring before Advent so I would encourage some outside study and meditation on this important Epistle in the weeks ahead. With that material to cover I will not spend as much time on the details of our worship as I have in years past.**

**I did provide copies this morning of the material that we have used in the past and the series of five sermons on worship can still be found on Sermon Audio for those who are interested.**

There are a number of fives that we will be considering and I trust we can have a bit of fun with them as well as seeing the importance of them in the instruction of our covenant children.

- We are once again a very young congregation when it comes to children!

By my count we have something around 11 from the age of seven to eighteen and 24 who are six and under! When you think about the covenant vows that are taken by the parents and the congregation at their baptisms, it should be a sobering and exciting situation! So, beginning this morning and over the next few weeks I would like to offer some overview of things that we have to help us disciple those children AND to be better disciples ourselves. In our text we read, ““If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.”

That is the spirit in which I want to approach these sermons AND it is the spirit that all of our parents, along with us as their helpers should approach in the instruction of these children. The task is outlined for us in those familiar words of Moses given to the people of God as they were about to enter the Promised Land:

Deuteronomy 6:4 “4“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. [*The Great Commandment!*] 6 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

And this is what we should keep in mind as we review the elements of our worship and some of the great truths of the Reformation... We should not walk away thinking, that was interesting or even WOW, the Pastor really hit a homerun with that sermon...

- But rather we should be looking for ways to use these truths to teach our children when sit or walk, lie down or rise up and to make them visible in all of our everyday lives!
- I will try to share some examples along the way, but PLEASE do not limit where the applications can go to what I might come up with!

So, I mentioned some fives, and now let me have the younger children help us with the first group of five... We speak about five elements or parts of our worship service: What are they?

Yes they are in our order of worship each week and we should take them seriously each week [mention study material] The next set of five comes with some major doctrines that are affirmed by most of those who follow the work of Luther or Calvin in the reformation. Some refer to them as the five points of Calvinism but there are two problems with that... First, they were formulated about a hundred years after John Calvin lived and secondly, I honestly think Pastor Calvin would be appalled by the term ‘Calvinism’ when you think about how Paul addressed such things in Corinth. There the Apostle warned against saying “I am of Peter” or “I am Paul” and we should take that warning seriously today as well.

Thus, I much prefer to refer to these five points as the Doctrines of Grace, which are commonly remember by the acronym TULIP: Would any of you older children like to take a stab at what they are?

- The depravity of man
- Unmerited favor
- Limited Atonement
- Irresistible grace
- Preservation of the Saints [*mention my revision*]

Now I mentioned that these were formulated about a hundred years after John Calvin and it was done in response to the false teaching of a man named Arminius who rejected much of the reformation view of God's sovereignty. The authors of the doctrines of Grace applied what Paul had admonished young Timothy to do many years before:

7 "But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is & of that which is to come."

And here is a place for one of those practical examples: The first doctrine of Grace seems strange when we speak about the depravity of man, and yet if we get this one wrong, the others make little sense. A wise man once told me during a discussion about the preservation of the Saints that IF someone was struggling to understand that point of doctrine it was likely that they did not understand the depravity of man."

So what major news event of the past couple of weeks would have allowed us to open up some good discussions on the depravity of man with our children or others we might have contact with?

The Las Vegas shooter of course and while the world searches and searches for a motive and some understanding of how a seemingly "normal" guy could commit such evil, we can know that the heart of man is desperately wicked and can honestly say, there but for the Grace of God go I or anyone else.

It is with such events that we can help our young ones, and ourselves, to better understand what the Apostle teaches Timothy about the salvation we have from our God, and yes it is a teaching that can be troublesome to those who proudly proclaim those Doctrines of Grace!

"9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. 10 For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe."

How can God be the Savior of all men IF we rightly believe that the atonement applies only to those who are the elect, those saved by faith? Again, this is a great place to show the importance of rightly dividing the Word of Truth. Just because we carefully define what it means to be saved in the doctrines of grace to defend against errors does NOT mean it is the only way that the words salvation or saved can be used in the Bible. Our proper understanding of Paul's point here actually comes from our lessons in the Book of Beginnings! [I told you we would come back to those lessons over and over]

Remember what happened when the sin of man was largely unrestrained by the Spirit of God?

That's right in just nine generations, the world was ready for complete destruction. *We saw the sinfulness of sin!*

➤ And what did God promise after that flood? Never again!

So, to prevent a recurrence, it means that God now works to restrain the evil of man until the full plan of salvation for God's elect can be worked out in history. That restraint applies to individuals and nations and reminds us that depraved man is not allowed to fully demonstrate his depravity... MOST do not do what this shooter did & that is NOT because the others are better people, but rather as Paul told Timothy, God is saving them from themselves whether they are Christians or not... Thus, Paul can rightly and boldly say that God "is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe."

OK, so time is getting away from me and I want to quickly bring in the other set of five we will be discussing: I mentioned the 95 Theses that Luther posted, which he actually called, "Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences,"

We will consider them in the coming weeks, but for now we should remember that he was focused on some specific problems in the Catholic Church... The dialog he wanted exploded into a full fledged reformation that has impacted all of Western Civilization.

I could not cover all the implications of the Reformation in a few sermons because it took Calvin about a 1,000 pages in his Institutes of the Christian Religion to make his case. However, I do believe it is a book that we should all have studied at some point in our Christian walk and it certainly needs to be a part of the education of these young people! For my purposes, we will look at the Five solas, that are used to summarize the teachings of the Reformation... Anyone want try and name them?

That was tough even for me! First, sola is simply the Latin word for alone and so we have the five solas...

1. Sola scriptura: "Scripture alone"
2. Sola fide: "faith alone"
3. Sola gratia: "grace alone"
4. Solo Christo: "Christ alone"
5. Soli Deo gloria: "to the glory of God alone"

Now in the coming weeks I will be showing how all of these interrelate and something you can ponder is how we can have five solas... If each is what we believe to be the most important and alone, then how can we have five?

- For this morning I want to quickly consider the first element of our worship along with the first of the solas: Scripture alone!

That doctrine was emphasized by the reformers because the authority of the Scriptures had been largely replaced by Papal decrees and the traditions of the Roman Church. It was an important step that needed to be taken and it impacted even the worship services... [mention Schaeffer series]

It was a grand historical example of what the Apostle had challenged Timothy with in his Epistle:

4:11 "These things command and teach. *[this is something those reformers boldly did and I am sure they could relate to the next part of Paul instruction no matter what their age as the church leaders looked down on them as ignorant upstarts]*

"These things command & teach. 12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

So the Roman Church had made the church gathered to be central and far too important... So does this mean that our emphasis on the elements of worship puts us on a road back to Rome?

- Especially if we focus on that first call the worship!

We will hear in many protestant circles that we can worship God anywhere, and that is reflected in how many Americans treat church membership.

As we often see, it is a matter of striving for a proper Biblical balance!

The Body of Christ is a Body of believers who are individuals but also a collective Body. We speak of the Church gathered and the Church scattered. IF we are only focused on being gathered, then the Great Commission suffers... However if we neglect the command to gather, we become like body parts cut off and left in a drawer to die, as Pastor Wilkins often reminded us.

- Then again, the Great Commission suffers because we are not the strong soldiers of the Cross that we need to be!

This is why the Apostle Paul again stresses to Timothy as the pastor of a young church...

13 "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. 15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. 16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."

- Now again this might seem contrary to those solas about faith and grace and even Jesus.

Is the Apostle Paul teaching Timothy that he can save himself and others?

-- Of course he is not!

- He is simply reminding young Timothy of that very important lesson that tells us that good doctrine results in good living!
- As Paul says in Ephesians “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”!

That is why Moses instructed people to speak of the things of God everywhere and why Paul tells ministers to teach people to do the same.

My hope and prayer is that I would be able in the coming weeks is to remind us again and again about the importance of our worship, the importance of good doctrine and the importance of right living.

It is our responsibility to teach these things to our children AND to be strong examples for our children!

As Paul told Timothy, it will save us and them if properly understood!

The reformers brought major changes to the western world...

- Changes which we look back on and easily see how necessary and beneficial they were.

But, we must remember that the vast majority of people in that time were content with the way things were before those changes!

And sadly, I fear we are in much the same situation today... There is a need for major changes and yet we may well be those fish in water who do not even think about being wet.

Our friend Andrew Sandlin posted a very relevant quote yesterday that we should consider seriously when thinking about the challenge of raising covenant children in today’s culture:

*Dare I say especially here in California?*

"The problem of leading a Christian life in a non-Christian society is now very present to us, ...

It is not merely the problem of a minority in a society of ‘individuals’ holding an alien belief. It is the problem constituted by our implication in a network of institutions from which we cannot dissociate ourselves: institutions the operation of which appears no longer neutral, but non-Christian. And as for the Christian who is not conscious of his dilemma — and he is in the majority — he is becoming more and more

de-Christianized by all sorts of unconscious pressure: paganism holds all the most valuable advertising space. Anything like Christian traditions transmitted from generation to generation within the family must disappear, and the small body of Christians will consist entirely of adult recruits." T. S. Eliot (1939)

The author stresses that we and our children are surrounded by non-Christian forces and influences and argues that we will lose all our children if paganism has its way...

However, it is more sobering to know that this is not a contemporary quote or even one from the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

It was written by the Anglican poet T.S. Eliot in 1939!

- He is giving the same warning that Moses and Paul have giving with regard to the need to disciple the next generation.

**We must be diligent lest they and we lose our way just as Moses warned those entering the Promised Land which God Himself would give them:**

- **A warning that should ring very true for our generation as well!**

**Deuteronomy 6: “10 “So it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, 11 houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant—when you have eaten and are full— 12 then beware, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.**

**13 You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. 14 You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you 15 (for the Lord your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the Lord your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth.”**

- **May we be those who strive to walk in God’s blessings and to pass those blessings on to our children!**

**Communion Meditation: Deuteronomy 8**

**“1 “Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, 12 lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; 13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; 14 when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; ... who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; 16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end— 17 then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’ 18 “And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.”**