

Rekindle your fire!

Bible reference for sermon: 2 Timothy 1:1 – 14

⁸ Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord...but join with me in suffering for the gospel, in the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, and this grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

¹¹ For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, ¹² and for this reason I suffer. ¹³ Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good deposit entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Twelve months and one day ago the LCANZ, our church, voted (and I will never ever forget the day) to ordain women as well as men to the office of the public ministry. I was the assistant Bishop of the church then. I was sitting at the front table where Bishop Paul chaired the session.



I remember seeing the result come up on a screen before it was announced. I'd also seen this before in previous Synods when I was Secretary of the LCA when the vote was different. I remember many tears which followed the announcement that the teaching of our church would change, and I think of people here today.

Today I thank God for this anniversary...for it brought us Pastor Sue and it brings opportunity for a new generation of young people, both women and men to study God's Word and to consider whether they are called to preach and teach it.

On matters such as the teaching of the church, we study the Scriptures carefully putting ourselves under the authority of God and his Word alone guided by the Holy Spirit. We did this and we should



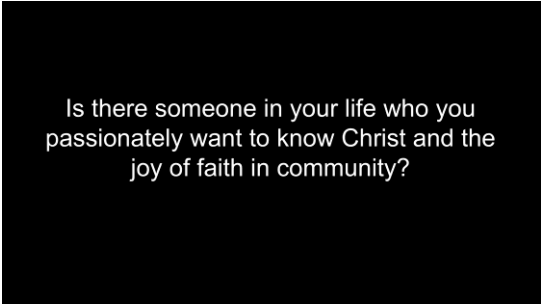
always do this carefully giving full attention to the Word, humbly and passionately. That was the story of that vote 12 months ago.

The call to the gospel, to humility and to live out our faith passionately is Paul's call in his last will and testament for his beloved protégé, Pastor Timothy at Ephesus. Timothy was Pastor at Ephesus and this second letter was written by Paul, possibly in the early 60's. The congregation has been in existence for a little time now. They face a world uncomfortable or even hostile to the gospel. The exciting stories of people coming to faith are inspiring but so often can trickle dry. This is the time for consolidation of the community of faith around the Word of God.

Paul was arrested likely in Troas in the 60's when Nero was starting to persecute Christians. Troas was in modern day Turkey in the region of the coast of the Dardanelles of ANZAC fame. Under Nero a charge against Paul was likely to go against Paul, even though he was a Roman citizen. So Paul was swiftly removed from Troas to imprisonment in Rome. He's under the threat of death under Nero. A threat that would come to pass with Paul believed to have been executed by Nero in the mid 60's.

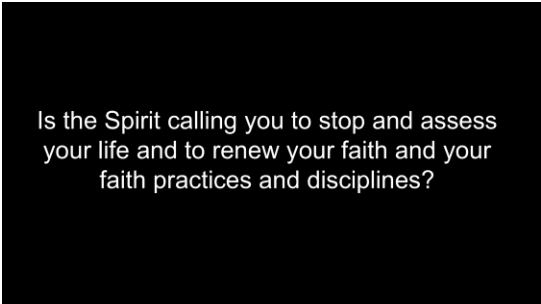
This is the context for Paul's letters to Timothy. Paul knows these are "last days" for him (2 Tim 3:1). This is Paul's last will and testament for his beloved Timothy.

Maybe those of us who are in our maturing years can relate to Paul here. Are there people like Timothy in our lives who we want to know Christ for them, and also to know that faith is a living, active, wonderful gift which gives life and around which true and wonderful community are built?



Is there someone in your life who you passionately want to know Christ and the joy of faith in community?

I love our St Paul's community. As an older person, I passionately want it to continue to grow and thrive and invite, through the gospel at work in the hearts of every generation.



Is the Spirit calling you to stop and assess your life and to renew your faith and your faith practices and disciplines?

Maybe those of you who are younger hear the voice of Paul calling you to stop and take stock of your faith life. Is this an opportunity to renew your faith, your Biblical knowledge, your lifestyle? Is God calling you back to himself or calling you to more? The Church is surely God's, and it's also surely in your hands, young people. So listen in.

Paul writes to Timothy of that which is vital and important for the future of the church. The passionate heartfelt words of Paul are shown in the image he uses: rekindle the fire, young Tim. In verse 6 of his letter: "rekindle the gift".

This gift is the gift of faith given by God, and the call to preach and teach it boldly. The verb rekindle in the Greek has the root words 'FIRE' and 'LIFE'. Paul is reminding Timothy to keep on keeping the gift aglow with life and vitality.

It's not as though Tim has lost this gift. Rather, he is called to actively keep it aglow! How?

Well, what would you say? How would you rekindle the flames of your faith?

Let's turn to God's Word:

On the day of Pentecost Luke records that:

³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:3-4)

The Spirit works miraculous faith, and the Spirit forms the church of many people with different gifts and languages and stories. So – stay connected to the Spirit.

And then in Revelation chapter 4:

⁵Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God.

John is transported on the day of the Lord in earthly worship into the midst of heaven and its worship. The seven-fold nature of torches of fire and the spirits point us all to the perfect ministry of the Holy Spirit, which is always to point us to and take us to Christ and his grace in, his suffering, his death, his resurrection.

Rekindling of the gift comes through the gospel alone. Paul writes to Timothy:

⁸Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord...but join with me in suffering for the gospel, in the power of God, ⁹who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, and this grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.



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At its core, the call is to worship regularly in community of faith. For here are the means of grace, the good deposit of God in the Word and in the Sacraments. Grow in your faith by growing in the gospel and in the community gathered by the Spirit around the gospel.

Read the Word. Let Christ come to you. Learn the Gospel. Pray it. Live it. Rekindle it!

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:

¹ Now I want you to understand, brothers and sisters, the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, ² through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

³ For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures ⁴ and that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

This is of first importance for Paul. Is it for you?

Twelve months on from the Synod I believe it must be for all of us. So what might this mean today?

Give thanks for God's Word and God's church

First of all, this means to give thanks. To give thanks to God for the work of the Spirit through the Word which led God's people to read the Scriptures and vote with good consciences and which now calls us to focus on the mission of God to the world.

Secondly, it means to give thanks that we here have the amazing blessing of a wonderful pastor in Sue who helps us unpack the gospel for us.

Give thanks for new pastors and all who answer the call like Pastor Sue.

Thirdly, since the Synod twelve months ago, there has been scaremongering going on which has made the false accusation that the LCANZ and its people have abandoned the Word of God.

“Bull manure!” Often this message has been associated with coercion and manipulation of people and their faith. Perfect love drives out fear, and God in Christ is perfect love. Let us focus on him. I am a Lutheran who is thankful to be a part of this church which always, like Luther emphasised, pointed me and you to the gospel of Jesus Christ and his grace alone as being of first importance. Take heart dear friends. There is a wonderful future ahead, because Christ is in it.

This first anniversary of the Synod decision is a time to give thanks but also a clarion call to grow and to focus our faith anew and with passion for the gospel which saves us and transforms our lives and our community FOR THOSE AROUND US.

Rekindle the gift that is yours from God and be ready to live it fully and to give it to all.
Amen.



Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul's Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>