

Dear fellow baptized, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son be yours this day. The title for today’s sermon is “Heirlooms” and comes from the Epistle lesson for today, from 2 Timothy chapter 1. Let us pray... Amen.

I remember growing up and visiting my grandparents. In their house, behind glass, most likely to protect against little curious fingers, were items on display. These treasures were very special because of whose they were and from where they had come. These were heirlooms. Often, the history behind heirlooms is remarkable. Heirlooms are items of importance passed down from one generation to the next, each generation watching over them and passing on the history to the next generation sharing the importance and significance of each piece. Now there are all kinds of different heirlooms and most are irreplaceable, not because of cost, but because of the memories and history attached to them. They can be as small as a pin, a coin, a recipe, a piece of paper, a book, or something as large as a family farm or even an international business. Most families have some kind of heirloom, but what I would like you to think about is; ‘What is your most treasured heirloom? How proud are you of it? Do you put it on display for others to see it, or do you keep it locked up, safe from curious little fingers and potential damage, and away from anyone ever getting to see it?’

In today’s Epistle reading we hear Paul reflecting on Timothy’s heirloom, the one Timothy received from his mother and grandmother; his faith in Christ. Now often we don’t think of faith in Christ as an heirloom, but in some ways it is. Paul talks about his faith in the same God as his ancestors. Faith is that special gift shared with everyone in the household of God. It is not just for the oldest, or the most responsible, but for everyone.

Yet you may say, ‘hold on, faith is not an heirloom.’ Well yes and no. Faith is something we’ve been entrusted with, received through the hearing of God’s Word. As such, it is something we can pass on. Pause and reflect, who first spoke God’s Word to you and who first brought you to church to hear God’s Word and to the font? Who taught you and shared God’s Word with you as you grew up in it? Who ensured you had solid teaching and lead you to confirmation? Who was there with you the first time you received Christ’s own body and blood for the forgiveness of sins? Was it not your family?

Still, calling faith an heirloom is not entirely accurate because it is not limited to one family or group, but to all in Christ. At the same time, faith taught at home, shared at home, demonstrated at home, is faith that is often carried on in the next generation. We hear in the Epistle lesson about Timothy and the faith he received from his mother Lois and grandmother Eunice. Luther, along with Paul, recognized the importance of teaching the faith at home. Luther wrote the Small Catechism for parents to teach themselves and their kids the faith at home in a simple and clear way. What a child sees and does at home is carried with them for the rest of their life. If faith is important, lived, and taught at home, there is a much greater chance of the next generation continuing in faith in Christ.

Yet faith in Christ is so much more than an heirloom to get dusty on a shelf, sun-faded behind glass, or corroded and moth eaten while locked away. Faith is a gift from God received through hearing the Word of Christ. Paul points Timothy to God’s Word. Jesus points us to His Word. Faith comes by hearing and the Holy Spirit makes us His own. Faith in Christ is living

and breathing, waking and sleeping, working and playing. It is not something hidden; faith is something humbly displayed and shared with everyone. Faith is not limited to just one family or nationality because, baptized into the one faith, we are all made into one family, one people in Christ. So even if your parents did not share God's Word with you, your heavenly Father still made you His own through His Word, and your brother Christ shares His inheritance with you.

At the center of your God given faith is Christ, hanging dead on the cross for you sins, and proclaiming His victory from the empty tomb! This gift from God is the heirloom of faith. The Gospel of Christ declares He abolished death, He destroyed the power of Satan, and He brought life and immortality to light. In short, the Gospel proclaims how Christ came for each of you and saves your life from Satan, sin, and even death. In sin you were dead. Because of sin you deserved eternal death and darkness. Instead Christ calls you out of death and gives you eternal life. This Gospel gift is entrusted to you and is the greatest news ever heard by anyone.

And yet, as with some and the family heirlooms, there are some who are ashamed of Christ's saving Gospel. Some people who have heard reject it or just put it away in a box in case they might need it someday. This can be eternally fatal! Jerome, (A.D. 345-September 30, 420) a 4th century pastor and bishop warned, "***I interpret as I should, following the command of Christ: Search the Scriptures, and Seek and you shall find. Christ will not say to me what he said to the Jews: You erred, not knowing the Scriptures and not knowing the power of God. For if, as Paul says, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and if the man who does not know Scripture does not know the power and wisdom of God, then ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.***"(Jerome's *Commentary on Isaiah* (Nn. 1.2: CCL 73, 1-3))

Jesus puts it even more directly saying to be ashamed of the Gospel is to be ashamed of Him. Christ warns, "**For what can a man give in return for his soul?**"³⁸ **For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.**"(Mark 8:37-38) Jesus gives a fair and terrifying warning. To be ashamed of Christ and all His words is to deny the salvation contained in His Word. To reject Christ is to reject the inheritance gifted you in your baptism and His continued promises in His Word and Sacrament.

This is hard, mainly in the world today, because people do not want to hear about Jesus. In part this is because the devil has their ear and heart, and in part because recognizing Jesus' sacrifice causes them to have to recognize their own guilt, shortcomings, and their own sinfulness. As a result, sometimes we tolerate the intolerable, justify the unjustifiable, and remain silent on deadly sins when God commands to speak up. Instead of telling people what they need to hear, out of fear of man, we deny our Lord and His Word. At this kind of time Winston Churchill offers some encouragement, "***You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life.***"

Paul encouraged Timothy to stand firm in the Gospel and to not be ashamed. Paul saw the power of the Gospel destroying and converting dead and rejecting hearts and creating ones with faith and trust in Christ. Paul told the Romans: "**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the**

Greek. ¹⁷ **For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”**(Romans 1:16-17)

In addition to the blessings of the Gospel, Paul also suffered for the Gospel. He was arrested and imprisoned, beaten with rods, received countless beatings, often near death, was given the forty lashes less one five times, stoned, shipwrecked three times, was hungry, cold, thirsty, and in constant danger.(2 Corinthians 11:23-27) Yet, through all the suffering, Paul boasted all the more in Christ and Him crucified.

But how great of an heirloom, or gift from God, have we been entrusted with? Was Paul simply insane or out for personal gain? Was he delusional? No! Paul was probably saner and more clear headed than we are. Paul knew exactly who Christ is and His gifts.

Paul tells Timothy, and by extension God tells us through His Word, to **“not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of Paul his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,⁹ who saved us”**(2 Timothy 1:9), **“not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life”**(Titus 3:5-7). He has **“and called us to a holy calling,”**(2 Timothy 1:9) **“a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”**(1 Peter 2:9-10), **“not because of our works”**(2 Timothy 1:9) **“for by works of the law no human being will be justified in God’s sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”**(Romans 3:20) **“Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”**(Romans 3:27-28) **“because of God’s own purpose and grace,”** (2 Timothy 1:9) **“for by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,”**(Ephesians 2:8) **“which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began”**(2 Timothy 1:9).

Jesus completed this when He took on our sins and buried them in His death. From the cross and the empty tomb Jesus proclaimed in His Gospel, by His blood and death, He alone abolished death, He destroyed the power of Satan, and through them He brings life and immortality to light. ‘Jesus shared in the same flesh and blood we have so **“that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”**(Hebrews 2:14-15) Jesus’ sacrifice destroyed **“the last enemy to be destroyed: death.”**(1 Corinthians 15:26) Because of Christ, the devil, sin, and death have no power over you. You can say with Paul **“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”**(1 Corinthians 15:54-55)

Your Father in heaven has given you a better heirloom than anyone could ask; Christ Jesus Himself. He comes to you today with His Word of forgiveness, His love, His comfort, and His peace. This does not mean your life will be good or easy. Instead, because you have been

given the gift of faith Satan wants all the more to destroy you. None the less, He who gives His gifts to you is faithful and is able to guard you until Christ returns in glory on the Last Day.

So, will you have troubles in this life? Absolutely. Will you have hardships? Indeed. Will everything go smoothly in your personal life, with your family, with your employment, or with your finances? Not a chance!

But are you delivered from darkness into the light of Christ? Absolutely. Have you received the gift of deliverance from death, the devil, and sin? Indeed. Did you receive it because of your own personal goodness or success? Not a chance! And thank God for that! You have been given something amazing. You are God’s because He called you in Holy Baptism, He marked you as His own, He paid the price to bring you to eternal life, and He is the one who continues to give you this gift through your regular hearing of His Word. He does this by the work of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you, and Who is part and parcel of the heirloom and gift of faith.

And so, what do you have to do for God now that He has saved you and given you His gift of faith? Nothing. You are saved by grace and not works. Instead, you now have the blessed privilege of sharing your gift of faith with your family and those around you. You are privileged to share in Christ’s suffering for the Gospel, by which God may lead others to salvation.

So, rejoice in the Gospel treasure you have been entrusted. Share it as freely as Christ gives it to you. **“Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.”**(2 Timothy 1:13-14) God is faithful. Christ’s gift of the salvation for you is amazing. Rejoice in His Gospel. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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