

“Unbound!” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 18 – October 9, 2022

- I. **2 Timothy 2:8-9** - ⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the Word of God is not bound!
- II. **God’s Word is unbound!**
 - a. Regardless of our situation, God’s Word is still able to engage the world... to do its powerful work of redeeming and restoring.
 - b. This week, St. Paul reminds the young pastor Timothy to be strengthened by God’s grace (vs 1) and to keep witnessing to others (vs 2)
 - c. In verse 2, he tells Timothy that all the teachings Paul passed on (teachings supported by many witnesses)... that these teachings should be passed on to other faithful people – who will in turn pass along the truth to others.
 - i. Timothy is to go find other pastors to begin the work of witnessing and teaching about Jesus, who then will find more men to take on that role.
 - ii. However, I mentioned last week that we are all part of the priesthood of all believers – that God has given us all a place in the witnessing of the kingdom of God and sharing the Word and teachings of Jesus.
 1. It’s important that we understand the roles God gives us – because God doesn’t want anyone to feel like, “that’s not my job” – He intends for all of us to be faithful witnesses.
 2. Sure, the pastoral office is different – at least in the public sense of teaching and preaching – but we all have role in helping others to learn about Jesus and the Good News.
 - d. Here is the part we don’t like to hear – we will suffer for witnessing – just like Jesus says in John 15 – “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.” (vs 20)
 - i. Therefore we suffer... we may even be bound in chains for the Gospel... but the Word of God is not bound.
- III. **Do we suffer for witnessing the Good News?**
 - a. As Christians in a very challenging time, we may choose to remain silent rather than face the consequences of saying what’s in the Scriptures.
 - b. Paul is in prison for the Gospel, and this is the last letter we know about as he reaches out to Timothy.
 - i. In America, we don’t face prison time or assassination attempts because we witness about Jesus (at least most of the time) – but we can face hardships too
 - ii. Just think about many people who are media personalities – whether they play music, host television shows, or they are athletes – people want to know their views.

1. If these popular people believe in Jesus, they are often attacked as “extreme” and lose future work or sponsorships.
 - c. Maybe some of you have jobs in teaching or working for the government that you must be careful not to cross lines in sharing your faith, or you may lose your job.
 - d. Yet, this simple witnessing about Jesus in family circles, friends and even at work is exactly why the Christian faith has continued to spread through the ages from person to person.
 - i. Yes, wealthy and influential people became Christians, but as Christianity spread from Jerusalem, the vast majority of people who came to faith by the power of the Word were simple farmers and workers.
- IV. **Christianity is everywhere now** because God’s Word is unbound!
- a. The world has around 2 billion Christians today, and a majority of people in the United States are Christians.
 - b. Yet, many Christians do not feel driven to witness or pass on the Word that changed them... and maybe that is because Christianity is personal to people rather than something to be shared?
 - i. In the U.S., Christianity has become more like an extracurricular activity than a life of faith.
 1. We have a schedule of things to do, and Sunday mornings we go to church a couple of times a month...
 2. We might schedule a Bible study for an hour...
 3. The kids might have a confirmation class or Bible study to schedule...
 - ii. A Christ follower does more than add God to their calendar of events a couple of days a week... A Christ follower lives for God.
 - c. I was watching the national evening news a couple of days ago, and they had a segment on the decline of Christianity in America.
 - i. Some studies show that the trend for Christianity in the future if it stays at the same rate will be less than half of American as Christian by the year 2050.
 - ii. The fastest growing group leaving Christianity or not wanting anything to do with it are 18 to 30-year-olds.
 1. Some people ask where our youth are going... and I’m not sure they are content with just going to church and calling that a faith life.
 2. More and more of them are asking, “What does Christianity do?”
 - a. Some only see Christianity being involved in politics, but not helping people.

- b. Some see Christianity as rejecting whole people groups who are gay, or from other countries, or the basis for starting wars with other countries.
- c. And some see the pain and hurt that organized Christianity has caused in the past and wonder what has changed.
- d. We Christians who have been changed by the power of God's Word should not only speak the Gospel message, but we also need to go out and **SHOW** the love Jesus has for the world.
 - i. Rather than just consuming the Bible studies, sermons, church services, and church activities – like any other item on the calendar – living out our faith includes volunteering, supporting and caring for others in tangible ways.
 - ii. I admit, as your Pastor, I have not always led by example in these ways – but the more we go out and show that we care, the more people will see that Jesus and His powerful Word are working through us... and be a part of their lives as well.
 - 1. Jesus even says in Matthew 5:16 – “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”
 - 2. Peter also says, “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.” (1 Peter 2:12)
- e. God's Word goes out into the world and changes things – especially people

V. **The Word of God is powerful – it can even save.**

- a. We know His Word created the whole universe just by speaking it into existence...
- b. We also know that Jesus is called the Word in the Gospel of John – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:1;14)
- c. By God's Word today, you hear, “I forgive you” and it is real.
- d. By God's Word today, bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus and you receive grace and forgiveness.
- e. By God's Word combined with water, you became a child of God – again receiving grace and forgiveness.
- f. All of this came to us through the definite plan of God, as He sent Jesus into the world to restore and redeem all things... including you and me.
- g. In all the ways God's Word could be stopped, nothing can or will ever stop it – not even us.
- h. Remember Jesus, the one who rose from the dead (vs 8) and redeemed us all – the powerful and unbound Word of God! Amen.