

Trinity 18, 2016  
Faith in the Midst of Chaos  
1 Timothy 3:14 – 4:16  
St. Andrew's Anglican Church  
Jacksonville, OR  
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*"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:14-15).*

How to behave in the house of God? What a good question for us today as we watch city riots, political controversies, and some of the worst environmental catastrophes in world history. Where do we stand and what do we stand for and more important...whom do we stand with?

The Christian church is built on a rock and that rock is Jesus Christ; and if *Christ be for us... who can be against us* (Romans 8:31)? We can be confident as Christians, knowing that we have a strong foundation on which to build and live our lives *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"* (2 Timothy 1:7). The way in which we behave ourselves in the house of God is a direct indication of our level of faith in God's promises despite our modern day controversies. Paul tells us that *"without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."* Those with true faith are able to rest in the Gospel promises and resist the seductions and fears fabricated by a world lost in its love for self.

If our history shows us anything it illustrates the downward spiral we continue to follow. The people who were born between 1910 and 1925 were called the greatest generation. This was the generation that grew up during the Great Depression and would eventually fight in WWII. They were deemed the Greatest Generation because they fought for what was right and resisted selfish desires...church was a normal part of life, the Ten Commandments were foundational and scripture guided

morality. Then came the Silent generation; they didn't say much, didn't raise a fuss or protest on the Washington Mall, but were responsible for the next generation...the Baby Boomers and it is here where we see radical changes begin to pick up speed. Church is no longer deemed a necessity, the me and my bible mentality begins to take root, individualism starts to undermine the essence of community, and morality begins to lose ground to tolerance. Then we seem to just give up. After the Baby Boomers we get generation X. I guess we were confused why we brought them into the world because the next generation is the Y generation. Y is there so much disruption; Y is there so much conflict...Y can't we all just get along? And we have now entered into our next generation and it seems as though all hope is gone because we simply call this generation, generation Z. That's the last letter folks! Maybe the next generation will known as the "we're sorry" generation or the "what the heck" generation.

Simultaneously, as we see the declining respect for each successive generation, we also see a decline in church attendance and traditional Christian adherence to the Gospels. Paul tells us *"in latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy..."* Now, I know that 200 years ago the same kinds of things were being said and if the Lord tarries, maybe 200 years from now we will still be saying the same kinds of things but, in our 'today' we can see the doors against Christianity opening wider and wider. We have become the minority and are being described as racists, bigots, multiphobics, and narrow-minded. No matter what side of an issue we take as Christians, we are seen as agenda ridden with only hatred and intolerance in our minds.

But let's not stop there! We have the Orthodox Muslims rising up against, not only Christians, but anyone who will not adhere to their demands to convert. To understand true Muslim orthodoxy you do not need to look any further than ISIS. They practice exactly what the Koran teaches without questioning the contradictions of its leader Muhammad. We have seen their decisive and deliberate actions without regard for life. Orthodox Muslims are eager to kill for what they believe...Christians are willing to die for what they believe...from a worldly point of view this is a formula that seems to put the Christian at the wrong end of the equation.

So, are we at a disadvantage as Christians? Yes. As a society are we backsliding and falling into mass societal narcissism? You bet. Are our enemies too powerful to overcome? I'm afraid so. Are we to give up hope in the promises of God simply because we have no control? Absolutely not! There is a common verbal response given to those who are suffering some kind of tragedy or mishap, those who have become the victims of unfairness; the phrase: "stand up and be strong, God won't give you more than you can handle." Really? Someone please find a biblical reference for me that support this statement. If we never incurred anything that was beyond our control...we wouldn't need God would we. Theoretically we could become gods ourselves overcoming all opposition without fail. But the truth lies in front of our very eyes. We are miserable sinners and have failed. We have lost our way and destroyed any possibility of regaining what was lost. But...there is one thing that remains...hope.

We are called to exercise ourselves unto godliness for "*bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*" That which is to come?! Hope! Hope that outside of anything we do or fail to do, the God-man Jesus Christ has already overcome and prevailed for us. You see it is in our weakness, in our inability to overcome, in our continued downward spiral, in our moral confusion of what's right and what's wrong, that we are drawn to the Lord and it is here where we find the strength to resist the demonic chaos that is consuming the world around us. *We Labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the savior of mankind.*" It is in our weakness where our strength is found! And that strength is Jesus Christ.

Too often we act, as Christians, like we are suppose to be in control, making the planet shake, rattle and roll for the Gospel of Christ...and while it is true that we are called to live righteously and spread the truth of Jesus Christ, we are only the seed planters...

In Second Chronicles chapter 20 Jehoshaphat seems excited, (a little over zealous to me) at the prospect that Israel is about to be attacked by the armies of Ammon and Moab. Jehoshaphat exudes great hope proclaiming "*Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of*

*thy possession, which thou has given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.*" (2 Chron. 20:11-12). What incredible faith, what an intense holdout for hope! When we come to terms with our own limitations we can then begin to focus our hearts, our minds, and our souls where God desires them to be...on the Son Jesus Christ. It is only through Him that we can advance the next generation in a positive light as the generation that stopped and turned back to God, it is only through Christ that we will overcome the labels of a corrupt society and be seen as the light of truth, it is only by the strength found in the Gospel of Christ that we will overcome our enemies no matter how intimidating they seem.

And then came the spirit of the Lord upon Jahaziel in the midst of the congregation: *"And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's"* (2 Chron. 20:15).

We must be careful not to take on more than what is in our own power to heal. We are only called to be an example *"in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity* and to not neglect the gifts given to us. When it comes time to vote for those in office...vote by the spirit and condemn no one else, you do not know what work God is doing in others. Keep yourselves under control in conversation, understanding that God is working through you and on you. Keep in mind always that there is a bigger plan than we are aware, the intricacies of which we are not privy. Sometimes what seems like a bad direction to us may be God's sovereign plan and we are only called to trust His leadership.

*"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.