

"A Peaceful and Quiet Life"

I Timothy 2:1-7, Proper 20-C, September 18, 2016

St. Paul wrote 13 letters that are recorded for us in the pages of the New Testament. 9 of those 13 letters are written to churches. 4 of those 13 letters are written to individuals; 3 of which were written to two young pastors, one named "Timothy" and the other named "Titus." Pastor Timothy was serving the church in Ephesus when St Paul wrote to him the words of our epistle lesson today. In chapter 1, Paul had already instructed Timothy:

- (1) To correct any false teachings that may have crept into the church at Ephesus; and
- (2) To help set the believers in Ephesus on the proper path of godly living.

Despite the fact that Timothy had been taught the Old Testament Scriptures by his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, ever since he was a child (2 Timothy 1:5-6), and despite the fact that Paul, too, had personally taught Timothy the Word of God—Timothy, must have remained a rather **shy and unassertive young man; bashful and timid**. This is why Paul says to him in the fourth chapter of this same letter: *"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12)!*

In Paul's second letter to Timothy, the beloved apostle is going to say it again: *"God has not given us a spirit of timidity and fear, but of power, love and of self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7)!*

St. Paul must have enjoyed a close relationship with Timothy for in the salutation to both of these letters, Paul addresses him as: "Timothy, my son" (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2)!

Even though Paul was Timothy's superior, Paul confesses to Timothy in the first chapter of this same letter that he regarded himself to be the foremost of all sinners (1 Timothy 1:5); admitting openly that he, Paul, had even, at one time, been a violent persecutor of the Church and an insolent man. But the powerful message of the Gospel, Paul also professed, Jesus Christ had totally transformed his life altogether!

When it comes to prayer, of course, it is always our first inclination to pray for ourselves, for our family members and friends; people with whom we are well-acquainted. But Paul tells Timothy to broaden the number of people he and the Ephesians are praying for! *"First of all, then,"* Paul writes, *"I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people!"*

A "supplication" as that word was used in Paul's day was simply a request, at times, that one person might make of another person, or even a request that one might make before God. But it was always a request that someone was making to another person or to God on behalf of someone else!

"Prayers," as Paul uses the word here, was the kind of request that one could only put before God; acknowledging that human beings did not have the power inside of themselves to bring about the thing that was being asked for!

"Intercessions" was a word that was also used in ancient Greek culture—to speak of a person or a royal subject—making a request in the direct presence of an earthly monarch, a king or a queen. So that there are times when we are to pray to our God corporately together as our King! You

know: "Praise to the LORD the Almighty the KING of creation!" Or one of those: "Beautiful Savior, King of creation, Son of God and Son of Man" kind of prayers!"

"Thanksgivings" reminds us that we should not only "ask" the good Lord for favors for ourselves or for other people---but to be chiefly committed also in THANKING GOD for the countless gifts he showers upon us day by day!

Too often, we are like the 9 of those 10 men that Jesus had one day healed of their leprosy. Yes, they called out to Jesus for help, "*Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us*" (Luke 17:13) and Jesus had healed them of their leprosy, but they never returned to give our Lord thanks and praise for what he has done! The only one who did a "Samaritan," the mostly unlikely of all the candidates among those 10 men to have done so!

Long before I arrived on the scene here at Mount Olive, it had been the established tradition of this congregation to reserve the back page of the bulletin as our "Prayer Page." Here we are reminded to pray for ourselves, for our friends, and for our loved ones---but Paul also reminds us that we should pray: *For kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life, godly and dignified in every way!*" --- What kind of life do you think it was that St. Paul had in mind here when he encourages Timothy back then, even as he encourages us today, to pray for a "Peaceful and Quiet Life"? -- There are so many good answers that we could all give in response to that question, most of which would probably not be wrong! But then I felt compelled to look for my answers to that question, above all...in the subsequent words of St. Paul in this text that he is sharing with us here! What might it mean for us to enjoy a "peaceful and a quiet life"? Certainly Paul is teaching us here that it would mean for us:

1. To live in a society—that is governed by LAW AND ORDER.

This is why we ought to pray not only for our own President and Congress, for our Governor and State Legislation, but also for rulers of nations all around the world; that these rulers be men and women who are committed to upholding justice and promoting freedom throughout world—that this world might truly be a place where the Word of God can be preached, proclaimed and taught to the JOY AND EDIFYING OF CHRIST'S HOLY PEOPLE.

2. Secondly Paul says that a peaceful and quiet life is the life of a person who is "godly" and "dignified" in every way.

- A. A godly life would be a human life that is characterized by many of the same attributes that belong to the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It would be a person's life that is marked by a dedication to pursuing and living out a life that is dedicated to truth of God as he reveals it to us in his Word and as he has made that "TRUTH" visible to us in the flesh and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (John 14:6).
- B. A dignified life would be the kind of life whereby we all could live with a goodly amount of self-esteem and self-respect.

People who willfully lie to others and know that they are often times not speaking the truth to others—will be people who find it difficult to ever have any healthy sense of self-esteem and self-respect.

Yes to live a peaceful and quiet life would be able to go home at the end of the day—knowing that you are going home to a place where the other people who live there with you in that home genuinely love, care, and support and nurture one another. Experiencing a peaceful and quiet life would be to know personally that when you are going home at the end of the day—to a place where you feel very safe; that is often times a sanctuary, set apart, from the harsh realities of this world.

3. Thirdly, enjoying a peaceful and quiet life would not mean that you and I are living with the personal belief that there is only One, True, and Triune God, but to know what our God's intentions are towards us and to all people everywhere.

It was God's own self-revelation to the people of Israel that led them to declare that there was only one true God. This they professed, though their foreign neighbors worshiped many different gods. The call of every good Jew was to rehearse out loud repeatedly those sacred words of Deuteronomy 6:4 known as the great "SHEMA" of the Old Testament because "SHEMA" is the Hebrew word to "hear." "*Hear, O hear Israel, the LORD our God is one Lord!*" (Deuteronomy 6:4)! Many of the believers in the early Church were people who were well aware of the great struggle it had been for their fathers and forefathers to declare the unity of God! It was these stubbornly, persistent Jews who maintained that there was but one God, Yahweh, and that there could be no other gods before Him.

One of the great landmarks celebrating the political freedom we enjoy in the United States of America is the Statue of Liberty on Ellis Island. On the one hundredth anniversary of the Statue of Liberty's being given to the people of the United States by the people of France in 1886, Oscar Hammerstein's son, Oscar was privileged to view this inspiring statue from the very close-up range or distance of a helicopter.

What impressed Hammerstein the most was the "painstaking detail" that the designer, Frederic Bartholdi had also built into the very top of that statue! Every strand of the statue's hair was in its proper place.

What impressed Hammerstein even more was the personal realization that the man who designed the statue, Frederic could never have known, at that time that the top of the statue's head was ever going to be viewed by anyone else except a few seagulls. Nevertheless, he went to the trouble to do the best job that he possibly could do in designing the Statue of Liberty.

Of course the handiwork of the greatest human designer or sculptor living in any place, at any time, always pales in comparison to the work of God. Just consider for the magnificent nature of the human body each of us inhabits! Talk about painstaking detail! Who would be foolish enough to declare that there is no superior intelligence behind the creation of the world!

The children of Israel declared not only declared that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was the one and only True God who is present everywhere, but they also declared that he was personally involved in the lives of his people. Yahweh, the LORD God Almighty, was NO REMOTE GOD WHO HAD CREATED THE WORLD AND THEN FORGOTTEN IT! He was involved in the lives of his people in a very permanent way!

The three greatest religions of the world declare MONOTHEISM, THEIR BELIEF THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD—AS THEIR CHIEF TENET IN ALL THAT THEY BELIEVE. Muslims do declare their belief that there is only one God. The Jewish people declare that there is only ONE GOD, BUT IT IS THE UNIQUE CLAIM OF THE PEOPLE WHO CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS THAT THERE IS BUT ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND HUMAN BEINGS, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS WHO LOVED US AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR US ALL!

AND CERTAINLY THIS WAS NO FRIVOLOUS CLAIM. MANY OF THE EARLIEST CHRISTIANS HAD BEEN JEWS. THE GOD THEY WORSHIPED WAS A GOD OF POWER, MAJESTY AND STRENGTH. To look upon God was to die. To even touch the things of God with unclean hands was to risk awful retribution. The Jewish God was no mere "man upstairs." He was a God whose glory could not even be properly contemplated by mere mortals. And yet, St. John writes in the prologue to his Epistle, *"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, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son of the Father...."* Old John's hands must have trembled as he wrote those words.

"There is only ONE GOD," St. Paul declares—and then he continues, *"And there is only One Mediator between God and men, the Man Jesus Christ who gave himself a ransom for all!"* The early disciples believed with all their hearts that there was only ONE GOD, BUT THEY ALSO BELIEVED THAT THERE WAS ONLY ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN—JESUS CHRIST!

They heard him teach, they saw him heal people's hurts, they witnessed his death upon Golgotha and they encountered him in his eternal glory on the road to Emmaus, in the Upper Room and on the mountain where he ascended to the Father. And throughout the New Testament they tried to sum up the impact of his life on theirs. They called him Prophet, High Priest, Servant of God, Lamb of God, Son of David, Son of man, Holy One of God, Son of God, Savior, Messiah, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Friends, to enjoy a peaceful and quiet life might mean that we are living in a society that is marked by law and order. To enjoy a peaceful and quiet life would be to live a life that is "godly" and "dignified" in every way. To enjoy a peaceful and quiet life would be to live with the personal belief that there is Only One True and Triune God—and to know full well what his intentions are towards us and to all other people as well! Yes, our belief is that there is only one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus who loved us and gave himself as a ransom for all, *WHO DESIRES ALL PEOPLE TO BE SAVED AND TO COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH (V. 4)!*

Do you know that when you check into a Sheraton Hotel these days that you have a new message you may hang on the doorknob outside of your HOTEL room to keep the housekeeper away? Instead of a "Do Not Disturb" sign, which has been the standard message for hotels everywhere for quite some time now, the message on the Sheraton sign simply reads: "Peace and Quiet." And the sign for this purpose at the more upscale Westin Hotel is simply one word: "Peace." People are not looking to just keep all of the disruptions and disturbances in their lives at bay as they are looking to find something positive. They are searching for "peace and quiet," or if quiet is too much to ask for, then maybe just some "Peace."

How can I gain access to this peace? The Bible does tell us that there is a way! These words are among my most favorite Bible verses in the whole New Testament, but sometimes I am not always in the mood to hear them or take them to heart—or to even hear that they are actually very practical words at all! *"Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice! Have no anxiety about anything but in everything – by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God, and the God of peace will be with you"* (Philippians 4:4-7)!

In these words St. Paul was really taking to heart the words of our Savior to his disciples on that first Maundy Thursday: *"My peace I leave with you! My peace I give to you! Not as the world gives, give I unto you"* (John 14:27).

Yet THIS is the question I would like to ask the Apostle Paul if I had a chance to speak to him face to face: “Paul, why didn’t you stop while you were ahead? These are some of the most comforting words in the whole Bible—did you have to go on to speak these rather disturbing words to some people today about the role of the women in the church?”

But let’s remember that St. Paul was not writing to Christians, at that time, in a 21st century world, but in a 1st century world. In those days if a woman who braided her hair or wore too much jewelry—those were the markings of a woman who was living outside of the parameters of God’s law.

Any way – I think that this is a good place for me to say: “Amen!”