



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, September 25-October 1 (C) – 1 Timothy 6:6-19

Focus: *Fight the good fight*

word of life

“But as for you ...shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith....” 1 Timothy 6:11-12a (NRSV)

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-19

After reading the text assigned for today, one can easily see why the letters to Timothy are called “pastoral epistles.” The author offers pastoral care and direction to Timothy and the readers in every age. One can almost hear the words of a wise, seasoned mentor counseling the new in faith on how to live out that faith as a follower of Christ and a leader in the church.

1. *As you read the verses for today, what pastoral advice do you hear?*
2. *Describe a time when you (or your congregation) received a pastoral letter?*

Timothy is urged to shun the trappings and temptations of a love for money and a desire for riches – a desire that “plunge people into ruin and destruction.” (1 Timothy 6:9b NRSV) Too often, the “good life” is defined by financial wealth and possessions; but for the faithful follower of Christ, the *good* life is a *godly* life combined with contentment. The good life is a life that recognizes God to be the source of all good gifts and trusts in God to provide.

3. *Read 1 Timothy 6:10. Do you agree that “the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil”?* ‘
4. *What are examples of the love of money leading to destruction?*
5. *What does it mean to live a godly life combined with contentment?*

The author of this letter to Timothy then articulates the traits of the godly life – traits Timothy and all who follow Christ are to pursue: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Some scholars believe that these verses are portions of an early Christian rite of ordination; these traits are mentioned in the ordination service when a pastor is called to serve in ministry. They are characteristics not only of leaders in the church; rather, they are traits we each strive to embody.

6. *Who has served as a mentor for you on your journey of faith?*
7. *What characteristics does that person have which makes him or her a good mentor?*

Living a godly life exhibiting these characteristics is not easy. Temptations lead us off-course. The seductive desire for wealth woos us away from a life of faithful living. It is a struggle to live a godly life. The exhortation to Timothy is the encouragement we need as well: “Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1 Timothy 6:12 NRSV)

Note the use of imperatives in the verses: shun temptation (vs. 11); pursue righteousness, godliness, etc. (vs. 11); fight the good fight of the faith (vs.12); take hold of the eternal life to which you have been called (vs. 12); keep the commandment without spot or blemish (vs.14). The role model and mentor for living a life such as this is Jesus Christ, who was faithful, even when facing the cross. “In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment without spot or blame.....” (1 Timothy 6:13-14 NRSV)

8. *How do you respond when you hear imperatives?*
9. *What is the commandment which we are charged to keep without spot or blame?*

word among us

The pastor had been called to serve and teach at a seminary. He took the task of equipping leaders in the church very seriously. He had high standards and demanded a great amount of time and energy from his students. Some took every class he offered; others tried to avoid any of his classes they could.

The professor had many unique characteristics, but there was one trait that every student knew. At the end of every session of the class, no matter the topic or season, he would always end with the same words of exhortation (in Greek, of course) from 1 Timothy: “Fight the beautiful fight.”

1. *Have you experienced a mentor or professor who had high standards for you?*
2. *What standards do we have for leaders in the church?*
3. *What standards do we strive for as Christians?*

“But as for you ...shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith...” (1 Timothy 6:11-12a NRSV) The professor knew the challenges and temptations his students (and every follower of Christ) face. He knew the struggle to be faithful, to live a godly life, to have the courage to stand before others and bear witness to the faith. He knew the allure his students faced of riches and the love of money. And so he offered a word of encouragement in the struggle: “Fight the beautiful fight of the faith.” It is a word of challenge; and it also our “marching orders” for how we are to live a godly, faithful, faith-filled life.

4. *What does it mean to “fight the good fight of the faith”?*
5. *Why might the pastor have chosen the word “beautiful” to describe the fight of faith?*

The good news in the midst of the struggle is the realization that we do not enter the fight alone. In our corner is One who promises to be with us always, even when temptations overwhelm us and seem oh so strong. In our corner are mentors who share their wisdom and experiences in the fight, who encourage us and urge us on to a life of godliness.

faith practice in daily life

Live among God’s faithful people

In our baptism, we are joined to a community of the faithful. And we are called to live in a certain way – to “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness.” (1 Timothy 6:11 NRSV) It is not easy to live this way. Stumbling blocks litter our path. Temptations entice us to put something before or in the place of God. We need one another on the journey.

6. *What are the daily challenges you face to “fight the good fight of the faith”?*
7. *What advice might you give to those new to the faith?*

As we live among God’s faithful people, we are renewed in our commitment and encouraged to live faithfully. We are strengthened to fight the good fight of the faith. As we commit and strive to live a godly life, we do not enter the fight alone. God is with us; Christ goes before us; and a community of witnesses and mentors is beside and behind us. Thanks be to God!

Prayer

Give us courage, O God, to fight the good fight of the faith, so that our lives reflect what our lips express: that you are our Savior and Lord. Amen

last word

Find ways each day to pursue
righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness.