

SERMON: "BIBLE BASICS – PASTORAL LETTERS"
TEXT: NEW TESTAMENT 1 TIMOTHY 6:11-19
NEW TESTAMENT 2 TIMOTHY 4:1-8

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INTRODUCTION

Ever had a good idea that you later realize is not such a good idea?

Yes, I know that is the exact same way I began my sermon last week

Never started two sermons in a row the same way before, but it applies here

Two words for you to answer that question about a good idea
turning out to not be such a good idea. Two words – Yard Sale

Our neighborhood was having a neighborhood wide sale (they do so a few times a year)

We have stuff in the basement and in cabinets we haven't used in some time

Figured it would be good to go through it, get it out maybe get it sold. Got it out.

Then spent all day, two days having people rummaging through our stuff

Yard sale stuff is stuff that may have been meaningful to you some time, family stuff,

Say gifts you gave your lovely wife she may not need or want anymore

(maybe picking out the right gift isn't one of your gifts). People go through
your stuff and some ask you if you can come down on the price a bit

It was listed at \$3 ... "I'll give you \$2 for it"

This morning I'd like to talk about legacy – what we want to hold on to,

what we want to pass on. Some of that legacy for me is actual stuff ...

pictures that help me remember special times, pieces of furniture

I remember from my parents and grandparents' homes, the apple china

the things that that help me remember the people

We continue this series on bible basics with letters about legacy

The scholars call them the "pastoral letters" – 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus

They have that name because in many ways they are instructional letters
about how to lead a faith community, how to be a pastor

That they are ... but they are more than that. They are about legacy

About legacy in two ways, I would suggest. One legacy is personal

It is what Paul wants to pass on, his hopes and dreams, the lessons

he has learned and wants to pass on. The other legacy is pastoral

I'd even say institutional – an effort to lay a foundation, something to build on

LEAVING A LEGACY

If you look at the beginning of each letter the title will call it a letter of Paul to Timothy or to Titus. Many scholars over the last 100 years have suggested these letters were probably actually written later by other authors in their own way trying to pass on Paul's legacy

These scholars point to the differences in the language used.

We all have our own unique ways of talking and writing – expressions we use, the way we make a point.

And they point to how much more detailed these letters are about the 'how to' of being the church, more institutional.

One example would be how we actually get mentioned "presbyterous" – the Greek word for elder. That is where we get our name. Catchy, isn't it? The letters make several mentions of this office leading scholars to believe these letters were written later as churches naturally began to get more structured.

The pastoral letters are about leaving a legacy ... and not just about process But even more so about what to pass on, what are the building blocks from yesterday that will serve as the foundation and framework for what gets built today, what gets built tomorrow and built to last

That discernment about what to pass on begins in the present

Much like going through your stuff to figure out what you most want your kids to have, what to let go of and what's in the way, the clutter

The first part of chapter six is about clutter, specifically the danger of desire and spending our money on stuff that won't last – future yard sale items. The verses I choose begin with the author offering a better way

But as for you, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. 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.

This admonition to 'fight the good fight of the faith' leads Timothy beyond the clutter Timothy is challenged to take hold of the eternal life to which he is called.

You see how that both looks back to what he has been given AND looks ahead to that eternal life. That is legacy language – finding in the past that which will take you forward in the future

You hear the voices of your parents and grandparents?

First thing they say "don't get caught up in all this foolishness."

Heard that a time or two. Also heard them try to pass on what they felt was important. That is what the author is doing here with Timothy

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

Now before we go any further talking about legacy and lessons learned,
Please pay attention to the language on what constitutes fighting the good fight
especially in days like these when the language of fighting is so commonplace

What coaching do we get in this corner, before being sent out to fight the good fight?
Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness
You know anybody who fights the good fight like that?

My encouragement with the rest of this sermon is to get you to think about
those people, the people whose example is one you've tried to emulate
one you'd like to pass on so that others might not only learn those lessons
but live them. Who are those people in your life – your role models?

Can I ask you to think of three such people in circles moving out from smaller to larger.
Someone in your family, someone you know from church, someone in the
larger community (maybe you know them, maybe you've just read about them)
Can you think of three people who you have seen fight the good fight ...
who have pursued righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness?

I'll tell you my three real quick. In my family, my parents.
You've heard me talk often about my parents as role models.
In the larger community, I'd say the non-violent leaders of the Civil Rights movement
people from Medger Evers to John Lewis to Nelson Mandela
And in the church, I'd say you - this Place for Everyone. More on that later

As you think about your three, let me mention one mentioned here in 2 Timothy – Paul
This may be Paul himself writing. It may be someone carrying on his legacy
Either way you hear a warning like we heard in first letter about what I am calling
the clutter (the stuff that's better off going in the yard sale). Then you get to
the stuff worth being passed on – the legacy you pray lives on

**In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living
and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly
urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is
favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage with the
utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will
not put up with sound teaching, but, having their ears tickled, they will
accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires and will
turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths.**

Let me pause there to offer some advice you're probably already considering
Those people who passed on to you a legacy worth leaving,
a legacy worth learning and living yourself ... they didn't always tell you
what you wanted to hear, did they? They didn't offer easy answers, did they?

SUMMARY

Another thing about them ... how they fought the good fight
They didn't just fight for what they believed, they suffered for it
That is what Paul did and what Timothy is encouraged to do

As for you, be sober in everything, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully. As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

When my time comes I'd like to be able to say that
That I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith
I do know the faith has kept me and will keep on doing so

How you doing naming your three legacy leavers?
Let me go back to mine and explain how you are one of those three for me

Leaving a legacy, as I see it in the pastoral letters, is not something done through a publicist. It is something done with humility and hopefulness
It is not an older generation looking over its glasses and giving these whippersnappers a talking to about how things ought to be done
It is saying, "here is something I value, I hope you find value in it as well."

That is something I see happening round here all the time
The church is a unique place where several generations can be together, where we can learn from and with one another. This particular church is particularly good at that. One of the things I most appreciate about you is your humility. I'm actually rather proud of your humility.

It's a temptation for people my age and older to try and tell you young folks just how valuable that fondue set I've had in the basement for 30 years really is
I don't hear that much around here. By the way, I'd pay \$2 for your fondue set

And it's a temptation for younger folks to maybe roll their eyes when I tell you that the Beatles are the greatest group of all time or to giggle when I mention Gladys Kravitz in a sermon (who?)
but we don't get much of that around here either. Thank you!

That humility and hopefulness is a part of your legacy
Like I said, as one of your pastors ... I'm kind of proud of your humility.