

“2020 Vision”

Matthew 28: 18-20; 2 Timothy 1: 1-14

Rev. Ed Hoekstra

Rekindling faith. This letter was written near the end of Paul’s life. Paul is languishing in prison and writes to Timothy words of encouragement for the future. Paul had been a mentor for Timothy in his ministry and continues to encourage him to rekindle the faith that has been originally given him through his grandmother and mother (Lois and Eunice). Paul is reminding Timothy about not being cowardly but to take the spirit of power and love and self-discipline in moving forward. The ‘power’ Paul is talking about is the power found in Christ’s love, as opposed to worldly power. In effect, Paul was encouraging Timothy to renew his vision in Christ in order to remain strong and not be bogged down by the persecution of Christians and false teaching perpetuated in Roman society.

Do not be ashamed. When one reads this statement in verse 8, the thought comes to mind about how we as a church and as individuals are ashamed of the gospel. The gospel is the most precious gift in life given to us from God, yet too often we find it difficult to share it with others. There is a fear of being shunned or rejected if we start talking about our faith. I believe that Paul is not only communicating about the persecution he is experiencing in prison because of the gospel, but also the hardship and suffering the church in Ephesus would experience under the reign of Nero when they actively share the gospel. Sharing faith in that context could be life threatening. Today, we certainly want to share the good news of salvation which is for all people. For starters, let us not be ashamed or feel we need to make apologies for our faith. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to give you the words, confidence and courage to express the joy of the gospel.

Grace has been provided. While sharing your faith, remember that faith is a gift to be received through God’s grace in Christ. The narrative of Christ is our narrative: Since Christ defeated death and rose from the dead we also die with him and rise with him. Not only are we offered the gift of eternal life through Christ’s sacrificial love, but also a life of purpose and joy. In receiving this gift, we share it with others knowing the Holy Spirit will help us do it.

Hold to sound teaching. The sound teaching Paul is referring to is not based on self- advancement in knowledge (Gnosticism) or following the law almost perfectly (moralism), but on the grace of God found in Christ. The teaching of God’s grace found in Christ is what we are to hold to. When we hold to the teaching of self-

advancement in knowledge and good works, we miss the mark. We are all sinners saved by grace.

¹⁴ Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us. As you move into the future and are getting closer to the end of your life, what legacy do you want to leave your family and those you mentor? Paul left a letter of faith, hope and love, encouraging Timothy to guard the good treasure he had been entrusted with. What are you doing with your treasure as you are at the start of the New Year? Be not ashamed, but share your treasure of God's grace. With the help of your resident Holy Spirit, rekindle your faith so you are not ashamed to share it, and hold on to the truth of God's grace through Jesus Christ. What else are you holding on to that is blurring your 2020 vision?