



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, September 11-17 (C) – 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Focus: *For Me ... For You*

word of life

“The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost. But for that very reason I received mercy”

1 Timothy 1:15-16a (NRSV)

Read 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Our readings for the next seven weeks are from 1st and 2nd Timothy. These books of the New Testament, along with the book of Titus, are traditionally called the “pastoral epistles.” The word “epistle” is often translated “letter” and is derived from the Greek “epistello” which means “to send to.”

These letters are named as “pastoral” epistles because of their intent and content: they provide instruction for the pastoral oversight of congregations and identify qualifications, duties, and characteristics of one who is a pastor or leader in the faith community. Although the pastoral letters are addressed to an individual (Timothy or Titus), they offer counsel for the whole church and for those in leadership positions. They describe what it means to be a minister of the gospel.

1. *Give an example of a letter sent to offer instruction and to identify qualifications of a leader.*
2. *What qualifications do you associate with Christian leaders?*
3. *Have you ever attended an ordination or installation of a new pastor? What qualifications are listed when calling a pastor?*

The verses assigned for today’s reading provide the foundational qualification of any minister or church leader (or any follower of Christ): “I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service” (1 Timothy 1:12 NRSV) The one who serves in a leadership role has been called by Christ (“appointed”) to serve and to trust (“is faithful”) in that calling.

4. *What does it mean to be appointed to Christ’s service?*
5. *Who in your church has been appointed by Christ to serve?*

The writer of this letter to Timothy gets to the heart of the matter: “The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost.” (1 Timothy 1:15 NRSV)

The ultimate qualification of any leader in the church is a firm belief and full acceptance of the fact that Christ came to save. That salvation includes even a former opponent of the faith named Saul whose zeal for persecuting followers of Christ was overwhelmed by the undeserved and overpowering mercy and grace of that same Christ he so vehemently opposed. That salvation includes every leader in the church; and it includes each of us. It is life-changing and name-changing. The persecutor becomes the apostle and proclaimer, Saul becomes Paul, leader becomes servant and follower, sinner becomes forgiven saint.

6. *What does being “saved by grace through faith in Christ” mean to you?*
7. *When (if ever) should leaders be given a second chance? Explain your answer.*

Good news such as this leads to songs of praise: “to the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Timothy 1:17 NRSV)

8. *How do you celebrate the good news of being forgiven in Christ?*

word among us

Fred had been in prison for two years for a crime he confessed to have committed. He had admitted his wrongdoing, served his time, and was back in the community. While in prison, Fred was visited by a member of Grace Lutheran Church's outreach committee. They became close friends. The visits led to a conversion experience for Fred. He promised to attend worship at Grace "one time" when he was released. Over time Fred became a "regular" at worship, greeting anyone new to the church, especially those who seemed to be struggling or in need.

But Fred never imagined receiving a phone call like this. He knew his life had changed, but he still couldn't believe what he was hearing. The voice on the other end of the phone line was the pastor from Grace. She greeted Fred warmly. She spoke of Fred's "ministry" to those struggling or in need. And then she got to the reason for the phone call: "Fred, the Nominating Committee would like for you to consider serving on the church council. We need your gifts." Fred was hesitant. "Don't you know my past?" he asked. "I don't think I am qualified to be a council member." The pastor was silent for a moment, and then said, "Maybe this call isn't just from me. Maybe it is God calling you to the very thing you are to be doing."

1. *What made Fred feel he wasn't qualified to run for church council?*
2. *Do you think Fred's time in prison disqualified him for a leadership role in the church? Explain your answer.*
3. *What qualifications are required to serve in a leadership role in the church?*

"The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost." (1 Timothy 1:15 NRSV) These words, attributed to Paul, are words of grace. If we are honest with ourselves and with God, none of us is fully qualified to serve as a leader. But it is for those very shortcomings that Christ suffered and died. "But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life." (1 Timothy 1:16 NRSV)

4. *How might our shortcomings draw us closer to Christ?*
5. *How might our shortcomings prepare us for leadership roles in the church?*

faith practice in daily life

Hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper

"The body of Christ, given for you." "The blood of Christ, shed for you." We hear these words as we gather at the table of Holy Communion. The words remind us of the reason Christ came—for me, and for you—to save sinners. We all fall short, yet we are called from the table to be ministers—to serve in Christ's name—to tell and live the good news of Christ's saving grace.

6. *How might you encourage your congregation's leadership team (clergy and lay) during the coming week?*
7. *What part of this lesson is helpful to hear again and again?*

Prayer

We give you thanks, gracious God, for your mercy and grace given freely for us. Amen

last word

Remember each day

that Christ came for you.