



The Festival of St. Titus, Pastor and Confessor
January 26, 2014
Pastor Daniel Naumann
Titus 1:1-9

THANK GOD FOR THE FAITHFUL PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL



Faithfully proclaiming God's Word can be difficult, can't it? Have you ever had that experience where you tried to tell someone about the Word and you just couldn't find the right way to bring it up, or you couldn't come up with the right words, or you just didn't know what to say? How about the neighbor who

you can just see it in his life...he needs and wants what you have, but you never seem to be in a position to share it with him. Or maybe it's a family member who knows God's Word, believes the same as you do, but when they have difficulties in life you find yourself at a loss for words, rather than just giving them the comfort of Jesus. Or maybe it's a tough situation when you know someone is doing something wrong and you have to tell them about it, but it's just so much easier to hope the problem goes away. Sharing the Word isn't always easy, especially when it hurts.

It was difficult for Paul and Titus too. There sure were plenty of situations that brought challenges to the Word of God. There were plenty of times when it would have been less awkward not to bring up Jesus, when it would have been safer not to bring up Jesus, when it would have been better for their reputation not to bring up Jesus. Yet that never seemed to stop them. They always proclaimed Jesus faithfully, proclaimed the Word faithfully, proclaimed the Gospel faithfully no matter what the consequence was, and no matter how much it hurt.

We don't know a lot about Titus. He isn't mentioned in any of the Gospels, and he isn't even mentioned in the book of Acts. He's often associated with Timothy, whom we know a little more about. They were both young pastors whom Paul mentored and took along with him in his missionary journeys as he built churches. But we only hear mention of Titus in a few of

Paul's letters. He's mentioned in 2 Corinthians the most. Paul says that Titus helped him and was a source of comfort to him during difficult times. He also assisted Paul quite a bit as they both collected money for the churches in Jerusalem during a particularly devastating famine.

The other place that Titus is mentioned in Scripture outside of the Letter to Titus is in Galatians. Paul used Titus to proclaim a very difficult message. You see, there were some Jewish Christians who were teaching new, Greek Christians that you had to keep all the Old Testament laws in order to be saved. Paul fought against this false doctrine frequently, and at one point he used Titus to make a point. One of the times he went to Jerusalem, we're not exactly sure which time, he brought Titus with him and refused to have Titus circumcised according to Jewish tradition to make the point that this Old Testament law was no longer needed to be followed for salvation. As Paul continued to fight this false doctrine, on one of his trips to Jerusalem he caused an uprising among the Jews, and then was arrested and imprisoned by the Romans who sent him all the way to Caesar in Rome. Salvation through faith in Jesus was certainly not an easy message for Paul and for Titus to preach. But thank God for faithful pastors like them who were willing to proclaim it by God's grace.

That same message of salvation through faith in Jesus isn't always an easy thing for us to preach either. Even for me as a pastor, there are times when I struggle to find the right words to say to people who need to hear it. While none of us are really in danger of imprisonment we still struggle when it comes to proclaiming the Word. We fear the awkwardness of the topic—that some people just don't want to hear it. We fear other people's opinions, because in our day and age everyone is different and you can't tell anyone that they're wrong. We fear what people will think of us and what our Christianity will do to our reputation or our relationships. It's not easy. Sometimes we simply fail to speak, don't we? There's always something more that could be said,

and we stress over what wasn't said.

Just this last Friday I had a lengthy conversation with a Jehovah's Witness and after about 25 minutes I couldn't convince her of the truth that Jesus was God and the true Savior from sin. I finally gave up and hoped that maybe some reflection on what she had said to me and further study would prepare me to answer her better next time. I really hope that there is a next time. But for the rest of the day all I could think about were the things that I hadn't said to her that might have convinced her. At times I felt like I had missed an opportunity to more clearly proclaim the Word.

When we fail to proclaim clearly God's Word, we often get down about it. We carry guilt about our missed opportunities. Sometimes that guilt is legitimate. Sometimes we need to hear the message that we have not clearly proclaimed and we need to do a better job of it. Sometimes that guilt is just a trick of Satan to get us to feel so inadequate in proclaiming the Word that we never even try. In all situations there's only one solution to that guilt. We carry it to the cross.

You see, Jesus was the perfect pastor, the perfect shepherd, who always sought the lost and proclaimed the truth of God's Word, even when it hurt. He wasn't afraid to tell people about their sin because it prepared them to hear about their Savior. It was his love for the lost that drove him to do this. That love for the lost drove him to seek out you and me too. In his Word, whether it's proclaimed to you as you study the Bible on your own, or whether it's through a pastor here at church, or from another believer encouraging you, that Word shows us the love of our God who sent Jesus the Savior to take that guilt on his shoulders and carry it to the cross. There he nailed our sin and our guilt once and for all on the cross. He removed it from us forever. There is no need to feel guilty about missed opportunities to proclaim his Word. Christ died for that. And as we experience again and again that real forgiveness of sin and guilt, that empowers us to tell others about this wonderful Savior who can take away their sin and guilt too.

That's the most important part of being a pastor. It's all about proclaiming that forgiveness. It's saying those words here in front of you every Sunday, "I forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." It's proclaiming those words after each table at the Lord's Supper, "You are at peace with God." It's speaking about and teaching that forgiveness to people every chance in the office or at home, bringing it to them in times of trouble, or just

reminding them of it in conversation. Thank God for faithful proclamation of the Gospel.

You faithfully proclaim that Gospel too. You faithfully proclaim as you encourage each other when you face difficulties. You share the comforting message that God is watching over you through the tough times. You share the sweet message as you encourage each other with what is waiting for us in heaven. You share the deep message as you ask questions in Bible Class where we can grow in the "knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time," as Paul put it. You share the harsh message as you encourage those who aren't here, even when it's tough to do so, and then you encourage with the same sweet message of sins forgiven in Christ as you invite to church. Thank God for faithful proclamation of the Gospel through you.

There's one more way that we can encourage the faithful proclamation of the Gospel. We can encourage young men and women right here in our own congregation, or perhaps a family member, a grandson or granddaughter, or a niece or nephew, who you think might make a good pastor or teacher some day. You can encourage them to think about becoming someone who faithfully proclaims that Gospel message of sins forgiven in Jesus every day. You can support the schools of our Synod that are dedicated to training these full time workers in God's harvest field—schools like Luther Preparatory School in Watertown; Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, MI; Martin Luther College in New Ulm, MN; and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, WI. You know these schools. You know them because that's where your pastors and teachers have come from. You know them as the places where our Synod trains our pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. As you support those schools and the Synod who runs those schools through prayers and offerings, you support the public proclamation of the Gospel for years to come.

Titus gives us a wonderful example of a young man who had the gifts to be a pastor. He was encouraged by Paul early on to faithfully proclaim that message, and it's the most important message there is to proclaim. By God's grace alone, he did faithfully proclaim it. And, as Paul encouraged him to do in the letter, Titus appointed new pastors to be overseers and elders over churches. God always makes sure there is someone to faithfully proclaim the Gospel to his people. Thank God for the faithful proclamation of the Gospel. Amen.

