

For Such a Time as This

A Daily Devotional

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

From 2 Timothy 3: (*The Message*)

But don't let it faze you. Stick with what you learned and believed, sure of the integrity of your teachers—why, you took in the sacred Scriptures with your mother's milk! There's nothing like the written Word of God for showing you the way to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.

Paul offers solid, pastoral advice to his young associate Timothy in this passage. The translation by Eugene Peterson helps to lend contemporary understanding. The purpose of scripture is to point us in the way of salvation. Reading scripture does not guarantee one's salvation anymore than encasing the Bible in a protective, Lucite encasement. Paul rightly holds that God in Jesus Christ is the source of human salvation, not scripture alone.

However, it is scripture that points us surely towards God's work in Jesus Christ.

Reformed theologian, Gabriel Fackre echoes these sentiments in a volume of his systematic theology:

Every pastor faces the hard questions of context in the weekly sermon. Will the people hear the Word? How can this text find its way into the life-world of these who listen? These matters are unavoidable – not only in the pulpit once a week, and in its worship habitat, but in the daily rounds of pastoral ministry. Where moral judgments are mad, counsel is given, church policy is formed, action is taken in the community and beyond, and of course on the formal occasions of teaching the faith, basic doctrinal decisions are constant. And with them comes the challenge to 'translate' the gospel in terms understandable to the people to whom it is addressed. Only the Holy Spirit can, finally, make this connection, but not without the medium chosen for that work by the vulnerable and historical God, in this case the earthen vessel of pastoral practice.

Fackre is correct – the pastor or interpreter of the text can be well-trained and well-practiced in the 'art' of explaining the text and making use of the direction that scripture offers, but it is ultimately the Holy Spirit, at work in the hearer and the preacher alike, that makes the connections that leads us to a transformed life. And that is exactly as it should be ...

Prayer for the Day: (From *Fifty Prayers* by Karl Barth)

Lord, our God, we stand in need, and therefore must be more thankful in everything. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Martin R. Ankrum
First Presbyterian Church
Greensburg, Pennsylvania

