

FROM THERE TO THERE

Order of Service (bulletin)

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Video (recorded live stream)

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October 5, 2025

Pentecost 17

2nd Timothy 1:1-8

To Timothy, my beloved child. I pray for a greater release of God's grace, love, and total well-being to flow into your life from God and from Jesus Christ! You know that I've been called to serve the God of my ancestors with a clean conscience. Night and day I pray constantly for you, building a memorial for you with my prayers. I know that you have wept for me, your spiritual mentor, and your tears are dear to me. I can't wait to see you again! I'm filled with joy as I think of your strong faith that was passed down through your family line. It began with your grandmother Lois, who passed it on to your dear mother, Eunice. And it's clear that you too are following in the footsteps of their godly example. I'm writing to encourage you to fan into a flame and rekindle the fire of the spiritual gift God imparted to you when I laid my hands upon you. For God will never give you the spirit of fear, but the Holy Spirit who gives you mighty power, love, and self-control. So never be ashamed of the testimony of our Christ, nor be embarrassed over my imprisonment, but overcome every evil by the revelation of the power of God! From Paul, an apostle of Jesus the Messiah, appointed by God's pleasure to announce the wonderful promise of life found in Jesus, the anointed Messiah.



I was planning on starting today's reflection by talking a little bit about the wedding in the church yesterday. My son Benjamin and Simone were to be married here in the church yesterday. We were going to gather the family and friends. Wedding in the sanctuary, wedding reception down in the hall. A full Spirit of Hope experience. The wedding didn't happen. It had to be postponed because my son Ben is ill. Ben's been in and out of the hospital for the last 3 months. He has had sort of surgery to deal with the immediate problem each of those times. They were all emergency room visits, but there's things going on behind the scenes of those emergency situations. And he's currently in the hospital for the third time, having just had that third version of that surgery. and we're finally starting to see specialists to deal with the stuff that is going on that's causing it. So, the wedding is postponed.

I planned on talking about how my spouse and I, Patti, have been married for almost 31 years (31 years in the middle of next week.) Stan and Tracy, Simone's parents, have been married over 40 years. And I was going to talk a little bit about how, hopefully we've given them some examples about how you can turn a a marriage of one day to years. We know that we've given them examples, both the good and the bad. Hopefully, a little more of the good... at least the ability to stick certain things out when times get rough. I always remember the line that Edith Bunker said in All in the Family when Archie started gambling again and Edith said, "Well, I

Rev. T. Blaine Gregg

married him for better or for worse. I'm just glad that the worst started to get better."

Last week, my central theme in the service was hope. Hope is that which can change, that can evolve, that can redeem, that can restore. Hope is the belief that that kind of stuff is possible. That all of the stuff that brought us to now, even the worst of the things that brought us to now, can be replaced by something new. The good and the bad experiences teach and they inspire. Brynn read to us part of the letter of Timothy where it's mentioned that Timothy's faith has obviously been influenced by that of his mother and his grandmother, the matriarchs of his family.

All children are influenced by their parents (or other adults in their lives) during their formative years. We try to pass on attitudes and practices that they will embrace to make their lives more fulfilled, make them better.

My mom, for me personally, was my mentor in the faith. Mom went to church uh all the time. Mom was a dedicated Sunday church attender. She served on church boards and committees. I remember mom being responsible for making a special honey flavored communion bread that we used. Of course, after the first time she made it, she had to make a new rule in her house that dad was not allowed to eat what he thought was for the family. It was to be saved for church. That lesson got learned. I would not be Reverend TBG today if it wasn't for my mom. She's almost 88 now and her memory of my formative years is faded or fading. But I will hold the memory of that legacy brought to me for as long as my memory stays near the front of my mind.

Legacy is a word that its root means of someone who's a representative... whose responsibilities have been delegated to them. We use "legacy" to talk about the things that have been passed on to us from others who've represented our life of faith before this. Each of us is given a legacy of some kind or another from the forebears, especially those two generations before us. Like Timothy, it was his mother and his grandmother. Those ancestors that he interacted with directly. Now certainly some of the influences that impacted his grandmother worked its way through her to Timothy. For Timothy it was those generations he was able to live and interact with.

And it's no different than anyone in our circles today. So we make this legacy part of who we become. We do that consciously and sometimes we do it unconsciously. Sometimes we carry forward the positive legacy. Sometimes we carry forward the negative legacy. I mean, how many children of alcoholics grew up to be drinkers? You know we don't all respond to that becoming teetotalers. It requires focused effort to put a break to any legacy patterns that need to come to an end on that line. And if we can get that line broken for a couple of generations, it will be lost in that generation we never interact with.

As spiritual seekers, our faith is influenced by the faith of our ancestors. Like a tree, its upper branches are influenced by all that came before it. And if you go into a forest, you'll notice that a lot of times the tree loses its lower branches that can no longer create leaves that can gain light from the sun. Only the upper branches that need the new energy might be there, but the remnants and the influence of all that lower growth is still part of that tree. Even if we can't even see a tangible representation of the leaves and the branches that were once on the lower part of the tree. Our faith is influenced by the faith of our ancestors and we reexamine that in modern times with our modern lenses that maybe our forebears didn't have. But we take what they gave us and they take what we experience and we create the faith we are that evolving face that has traversed through the legacy.

It was within 20 years of Jesus' death that the tales of his meal and table habits became legendary within the church. Left a legacy in the church. After 20 years there would still be people in the communities that had that

Rev. T. Blaine Gregg

firsthand experience. They remembered (and maybe were present for) stories like Jesus telling Zacchaeus, the despised Roman collaborator, "I'm going to have supper with you." They remembered Jesus being at Simon the leper's house for supper. I mean, first of all, eating at the home of a leper was already breaking the rules of good society. What if this leper was contagious? What if Jesus and others got ill because they were meeting with the leper? But more so, Simon's leprosy is not the focus of that story because another person comes into the room. A person who the gospel writers say will be remembered forever for this, but they didn't remember her name. But her actions are remembered. She put expensive perfume on Jesus' head. It filled the room. But Jesus' disciples, some of them thinking that this was a time to rebuke because what if that expensive ointment had been sold and they could raise money for something else. In that moment Jesus rebukes them for rebuking her and says that what she's done is an act of love, not an act of wastefulness. Jesus practiced the welcome table.

In the book of Acts, which tells stories before the time of Paul but after the time of Jesus, was actually written in the 70s. So there's a few years of adaptation and retelling and maybe some exaggeration or some details lost. But in the book of Acts, in that first year after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, the church stayed together. And it tells us right in chapter 2 that they devoted themselves to the teachings that Jesus' disciples were sharing; that they met together as a community just to be with each other. and they broke bread together and they prayed. A few verses later, it reminds us that the people broke bread together and ate together with glad and generous hearts. And then there's of course Jesus' last supper. around the 33rd year of the common era. Sometime in the early to mid-50s, so 20 years or so after the event itself, Paul writes to an early church that is practicing a community ritual meal together. They're doing it on Sunday evenings, the day of Jesus' resurrection. They're doing what the people in the book of Acts are said to have done. Meeting in fellowship to teach and learn and pray together over a meal. Now, it wasn't a common meal. It wasn't even a potluck. It certainly wasn't a catered event. It sounds like it was everybody would bring their own picnic basket to a central place and eat the meals that we would have had at home together. Now, what Paul's problem with that early church was is that some of them were so eager to get to their basket that they didn't wait for everyone to get there. And some people had so much that it was more than their particular group could eat; but there were others who had very little or some who had nothing. And there wasn't a sense that they were eating together. It's just they were eating alone who just happened to be in the same room as a bunch of other people who were eating alone. And that wasn't what Paul hoped that they would do. And so Paul writes a reminder of their legacy and retells the version of the Lord's Supper that he knows. And it's actually the oldest version of the Lord's Supper we have in the Bible because it predates the writing of the Gospels that describe the Last Supper as a narrative event.

Jesus on the night he was arrested breaks bread with his disciples. Drank wine. Very likely a bread and wine relating to the remembrance of Moses and the people's liberation from slavery. And more than that, that act is a reminder that the followers of Jesus should in the future whenever they're eating and drinking, not just at special meals, whenever they're eating and drinking to remember Jesus being with them.

And if they needed a metaphor to make that work, well, think of the bread as the solid parts of Jesus. Think of the wine as the liquid parts of Jesus, the body and the blood of Jesus. Paul quotes Jesus: *and remember, whenever you eat and drink, it's as if I'm at the table with you.* That's what Paul tells the early church.

That's what we're doing in our communion here today. Communion means coming together. It's reminding ourselves that it's not just our branches on the tree, but it's everything down to the roots. And it's not just here. This particular Sunday, the first Sunday in October, is recognized by Christian denominations all around the world as a day to share communion. Not every church has communion every week. Not every church does it every couple of months like we do here. Some churches might do it only a few times a year, but a lot of

Rev. T. Blaine Gregg

churches around the world, whatever their pattern is for communion, are sharing the gifts of the table today. It's worldwide communion Sunday.

This is Jesus' legacy at the welcome table and it's ours to carry. So that when we leave this table and we go about our days and we're sitting by ourselves or with others just with our evening meal today or maybe you're having lunch after church... when you eat and drink: Christ is your companion at that table. This is the welcome table. This is our legacy.

Rev. T. Blaine Gregg