

Advent Midweek 3 - Titus 2:1-15

Rev. Jeff Hendrix | Faith Lutheran Church

Titus 2:1-15

But as for you, speak what is appropriate for sound doctrine. Encourage older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, love, and patient endurance.

Likewise, encourage older women to be reverent in their behavior, not slanderers, not enslaved to much wine, but teachers of what is good, so that they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, busy at home, kind, and submitting to their own husbands, that the word of God might not be slandered.

Likewise, encourage younger men to be self-controlled. In all things show yourself to be an example of good works. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that the one who opposes us will be put to shame, because he has nothing bad to say about us.

Encourage slaves to submit to their masters in everything, to be pleasing to them, not to be argumentative with them, not to steal from them, but to demonstrate their complete trustworthiness, so that they may show the teaching of God our Savior to be attractive in every way.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It trains us to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, that is, the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are his own chosen people, eager to do good works.

Keep telling people these things. Continue to encourage and rebuke with full authority. Let no one ignore you.

Christmas Trains Us to Live As Christ's Own Bride

In a little over a week, 2017 will end, and we will come to the end of our year-long Reformation 500 commemoration. In just a few days, on Sunday, we'll participate in our children's Christmas program, which this year is based on a children's program that Martin Luther himself wrote: "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come." Luther actually had more to do with our modern celebrations of Christmas than we think about most of the time.

But lest we put Martin Luther on too high of a pedestal, we should realize, thanks to our texts for tonight, that Luther was no greater of a person than anyone else, including his own wife, Katherina von Bora Luther, or Katie Luther. And we'll also see from our texts that no matter what our vocation or station in life is, that Christmas Trains Us to Live as Christ's Own Bride.

We remember Luther's bride, Katie today because it was on this date in 1552 that Katie died and entered heaven. The most famous story about Katie Luther was that she escaped from the convent as a nun. It was Martin Luther who actually arranged for the nuns to escape, which was how they met and eventually married. The women were hid in a covered wagon, by night, on Easter Eve, and taken to Torgau. So it may seem, at first glance, that Katie was rejecting authority here, even rejecting Paul's own words here in Titus.

And it is true she did escape from being a nun, but it wasn't that she was rejecting authority, rather that she was rejecting a perversion of God's Word. She fled not because she simply wanted to be able to choose what was best for her life, but she fled from a false interpretation of God's Word. In fact when she fled, she had nowhere to go, she was literally giving up everything for the sake of God's truth. She submitted to the highest authority, which was obeying God rather than men.

Religious life and secular life had been so separated and distorted, and it was believed that one was better than the other. Nuns and monks, it was believed, were better able to earn heaven. That's the reason Luther himself became a monk, He thought God was so angry with him, that the best thing he could do for God was to dedicate his life to God, to separate Himself and vow a life of chastity, because monks by their holy living and vocation, were thought to be more pious and closer to God than other vocations. And there's the trouble: The idea that one vocation is more godly, more pious, or somehow better, than any other vocation.

But the vocation of pastor or any religious vocation is not better than the vocation of anything else; I have no higher place in heaven because I'm a pastor, I will not get to heaven easier because I'm a pastor. Religious vocations are no better than the vocation of accountant, technician, secretary, garbage collector, or simply the vocations of husband or wife. But each one serves a different purpose.

One vocation is not better than another, but simply different.

How often today do we immediately want to jump to the conclusion that because something is different, it's either inferior or better? In marriage for instance, our society wants to make the two people in the union the same in all respects, because some over time have wrongly thought one person in the marriage union was better than the other.

Katie Luther had a partnership with Martin in their marriage. It wasn't one dominating the other and the other being subservient, it was a partnership where they would encourage and help each other. Katie served faithfully as a wife, she managed for the household, which at times more like a homeless shelter than a normal household with dozens of guests all the time. She took care of the finances, was a great business woman, she was the farmer, she even brewed the beer, while Martin was the spiritual head, leading devotions each night in addition to his duties as pastor. Without her, many of the accomplishments we attribute to Martin Luther, he wouldn't have been able to do.

At one point in Martin and Katie's life, Erasmus had accused Luther of false teaching, even though it was Erasmus that was in the wrong. Martin Luther was unsure of what to do, and it was Katie who encouraged him to respond to the accusations and to stand up, not for himself, but for the Word of God. In her vocation, she encouraged him to fulfill his. Martin and Katie were sinners of course, which didn't negate their roles, but rather emphasized the unique need for each one.

We read in Titus, what God desires of men: "Speak what is appropriate for sound doctrine. Encourage older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, love, and patient endurance." Men are to be teachers of sound doctrine, men, like Martin, are the pastors for their individual families. They are to be "temperate, worthy of respect" - that is, they shouldn't simply expect their family to listen to them because they are the "man of the house," but they earn that respect. They are to be "self-controlled," a rock when things get shaky in the family, holding firm to the Word of God, they are to be "sound in faith, love, and patient endurance." Because pastors are no higher than anyone else, that means that men need to know Scripture, to live and apply it to their families. Religion is not to be separated from your vocation.

Paul says, "In your teaching show integrity, seriousness, and sound speech that cannot be condemned." Young men are to be the example of what they teach their families, so that no one can say anything bad about them. Men give of themselves for their wives and their families.

"Likewise," Paul continues, "encourage older women to be reverent in their behavior, not slanderers, not enslaved to much wine, but teachers of what is good, so that they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, busy at home, kind, and submitting to their own husbands, that the word of God might not be slandered."

Everything she does also is not for herself, but for her family, "That the word of God might not be slandered." Not so the husband feels more important, not so the husband can tell his wife what to do, not so the husband gets what he wants, but so the word of God might not be slandered. She lives and works for the well-being and livelihood of others. She is not interested in promoting her own self-worth, but her worth is demonstrated by her service, which is motivated by her husband's love for her, and ultimately by God's love for her.

This is completely counter to the world. The world says 'it's all about me.' The world trains men to dominate, all the while forcing their wives and families to serve them. The world trains women to take over for their lazy and pathetic husbands. The world trains me to believe that I am better than my spouse, my work is better than everyone else's, and I will be saved because of it. The world trains me to believe that different means better or inferior. Paul's words in Titus? These are completely unnatural and counter-cultural.

But so is Christmas. Christmas is unnatural and counter to the world. God became Man. A Virgin conceived. A King was born in a barn. Angels announced to lowly shepherds. God submitted Himself to His own Laws. He obeyed those Laws and then was crucified for it. He was killed for being who He was, the Son of God. And yet, because God became humble, we will be glorious. Because God came to to our home, we get to go to His. Because God took our sins, we get His righteousness. Because God died, we live. We call this "grace," God's undeserved love for sinners, for us. And it appeared at Christmas:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It trains us to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, that is, the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are his own chosen people, eager to do good works.

Christ gave of Himself completely for His bride, the Church. She had blemishes and sins, and yet, He covered them. Husbands do the same for their wives because Christ has first done it for us. Husbands cover every blemish of their wife, even at their own expense. Wives listen to their husbands as the Church listens to Christ, because Christ has first demonstrated His love for Her, proving to Her that He will not do anything to harm Her, He has done everything for Her benefit, including giving His own life. Wives are of such value to husbands, as proverbs told us, "For her worth is far above rubies."

Christ made the Church radiant and glorious, while He became bloody. She was of such value, that He redeemed her "not [even] with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood, and with

His innocent suffering and death; in order that [she] might be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.”

At Christmas, Christ has brought salvation to all people, regardless of vocation, age, social status, or gender. All are equal in God's Kingdom. Entrance into God's home, His Kingdom of Heaven, isn't based on anything we do, or who we are. It has nothing to do with my vocation of pastor, just as it has nothing to do with your vocation of husband, wife, son, or daughter. Our entrance into heaven is because Christ has redeemed us, He has purchased us by His blood, by giving of Himself for us.

So until Christ comes again at His 2nd Advent, He has given each of us our roles that reflect and point to the relationship that Christ has with His Church, and we are trained and motivated to fulfill them because Christ has already stepped into our role when He was born into the world. “But the grace of God has appeared” - God's unnatural, counter-cultural grace has appeared to us at Christmas - “bringing salvation to all people,” - all people regardless of who they are or what they do - and as a result, “trains us” to live as Christ's own bride.

Amen.

Gloria patri...