10/5-6/19 Not Ashamed Rev. Amy Haines

2 Tim 1:1-14 World Communion

Have you ever experienced one of those embarrassing moments you wish you could forget?

I can recall with embarrassment the funeral I conducted where I called the current wife of the son of the deceased by the ex-wife’s first name. I wondered about the looks that went back and forth up and down the aisle, and only later realized I had written down the wrong name in my funeral liturgy.

..A woman once told of a time when she was in high school and musical car horns were popular.

Her mother’s deluxe car horn model played the first line of 48 different songs. But when it was extremely cold, the horn sometimes developed a short and played on its own. She had urged her mother to take the horn out of the car, but her mother had refused to get rid of it. Then on a fateful cold winter afternoon the family was attending a graveside funeral service for an elderly aunt. As they were pulling out of the cemetery, the horn blared the first stanza of “We’re In The Money”. The horn was never heard again.

A man and his wife met a new couple at church one Sunday, and they stopped and introduced themselves. They described the friendly neighborhood they lived in and listened sympathetically as the new couple described their neighborhood as just the opposite. The man and his wife said goodbye to the new couple and got in their car and drove home. As they approached their house, they were horrified to see that their newfound friends they had met at church were pulling into the driveway next door.

 -- Chris Santasiere “Do Not Be Ashamed” 9-02 sermoncentral.com

In life we will all do things that embarrass us, or our parents, or our neighbors, or our friends.

And often at class reunions and family gatherings we share those stories and laugh at ourselves,

at our struggles and bloopers and school age antics.

Why is it we are not ashamed to share those stories, yet when the time comes to sharing our faith in Jesus, sharing how Jesus changed our life, or even inviting someone else to join us for worship, we suddenly being timid and shy and embarrassed to talk about what we believe and why?

Think about it—when was the last time you shared with a neighbor the joy Jesus brought into your life? When was the last time you shared with a co-worker an insight you gained from Scripture in the past week? When was the last time you prayed with a close non-churched friend going through struggles?

Sadly, we struggle not only to share with our friends and neighbors, we also struggle to share with our brothers and sisters in Christ in the church. If I were to ask you for the next five minutes to turn to a person sitting near you to share why you are here today, one struggle with sin you have faced this week, and one experience of grace from your life in the past month,

how many of you would come up with an excuse to run to the bathroom or start talking about football or the weather because you are ashamed to share your faith struggles or embarrassed to talk about your faith journey, even with those here who receive the same grace and love and mercy of God?

Living by our Christian faith takes courage. Willingness to share our faith takes boldness.

And today, whether your faith is gung ho and ready to go or your faith is beat down by struggle and schedules, listen to the Apostle Paul’s words, words of encouragement to Timothy in the first century church and words to us in the twenty-first century church.

Paul does not want to see us fail! He yearns for us to believe what has been handed down to us,

and share that good news with others. He desires for us to be faithful to the good news of Jesus

rather than floundering in doubt and false doctrine.

So his words today are once again words of encouragement to keep the faith.

Originally, Paul wrote these words to a young Christian leader named Timothy. Timothy was part of the second round of leaders in the early church, a third generation Christian who was appointed to serve the church in Ephesus. Paul was now under house arrest in Rome, and unable to travel to the house churches scattered through the Roman Empire. So he spent his time writing letters and encouraging those in leadership to remain faithful to the good news of Jesus proclaimed to them, good news they were now empowered to share with others.

Being a Christian, let alone a Christian leader in the first few centuries of the church, was never easy. Christians were ridiculed by both Jew and Gentile.

..By the time of the Nicene Council in the 4th century A.D., of the 318 delegates attending, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or lost a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture

for their Christian faith.

--Vance Havner. Sermonillustrations.com:suffering

Yet if those early Christians had given up their faith in Jesus, you and I would not be here today!

If we live only a lukewarm faith, how much hope is there for a strong generation to follow us?

So Paul encourages us along with Timothy to keep the faith in these ways:

1. rekindle the gift within you

2. don’t be ashamed

3. guard the good treasure

**rekindle the gift within you**

Paul said to Timothy: **“**I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands.” (v5-6)

Timothy learned about Jesus through the faith of his grandmother and his mother. How many of us here today can credit the example of a parent or grandparent for helping to shape our faith? While worship and service and study within the community of the church is important,

faith that is lived out at home, in the midst of daily life, is the best example of how to follow Jesus. We need to not be afraid to talk about our faith with our family. So go home and share what you learned from worship today. Go home and share what you struggled with in worship today. Pray together. Encourage one another. Share your God sightings from the past week with one another.

We need to encourage one another, for life has a subtle manner of getting in the way of faith.

We get busy and skip worship. We get tired and skip our study or prayer time. We get weary when others aren’t living out of their giftedness in the name of Jesus.

I have no doubt the church in Ephesus was not an easy church for Timothy to lead. They had their internal struggles. They were swayed by others who promised a better life other than the sacrificial and loving way of Jesus. I wonder if by now Timothy is tired of dealing with apathy and struggle, and forgetting why God called him in the first place. Maybe Timothy, like many leaders, was already beginning to burn out.

So Paul called Timothy back to his original call to follow, love and serve Jesus. Paul encouraged Timothy to rekindle the gift of God within him, the gift of God’s presence, the gift of God’s call,

the gift of God’s care. Remember the faith passed down to you from your family. Remember what Paul taught you on mission together. Remember how the Holy Spirit has empowered you, and be encouraged. No matter what you will face, God will be with you.

Rekindle the gift of God within you. Literally, Paul is encouraging Timothy to fan the flame of faith.

Think about the last time you sat around a campfire. Last Sunday, as we had s’mores on the back patio during the church meal, my son Timothy was the keeper of the flame. As the flames began to burn down, he would add another log to the fire. He continued to fan the flame

so that there was enough fire to roast our marshmallows. Yet at the end of the day he had to let the fire burn out.

Paul doesn’t want to see any followers of Jesus burn out, neglecting to use their God given gifts for ministry. So he encourages us alongside Timothy today to fan the flame of faith within us, to remember who has called us and why we are called, and to rekindle the gift of God within us.

**don’t be ashamed**

When we rekindle the gift of God within us, then we don’t have any reason to be ashamed to claim our faith in Jesus. Paul reminded Timothy:

“So don’t be ashamed of the testimony about the Lord or of me, his prisoner. Instead, share the suffering for the good news, depending on God’s power. God is the one who saved and called us with a holy calling. This wasn’t based on what we have done, but it was based on his own purpose and grace that he gave us in Christ Jesus before time began. … I was appointed a messenger, apostle, and teacher of this good news. This is also why I’m suffering the way I do, but I’m not ashamed. I know the one in whom I’ve placed my trust.” (v8-9, 11-12a CEB)

Have you ever encountered someone so enthusiastic about Jesus that you’re embarrassed to be around them? Or have you ever encountered someone who has suffered for their faith

and you’re ashamed that they had to suffer and you did not?

In high school my youth group was encouraged to be bold in living our faith. One girl sewed the words “Jesus Freak” in large letters on the back of her jean jacket. Imagine the comments she got walking down the halls of Middletown High School. I would sometimes wear a large nail cross that would garner strange looks from my classmates.

I think a lot of our suffering for our faith comes from those who do not understand the amazing grace and abundant mercy of God. So we are ridiculed or shunned, judged and ostracized. They see negative stereotypes portrayed on TV and in the media, and think all of us are religious fanatics that exclude and shame and condemn others to hell.

Yet Paul literally suffered, through chains and beatings and arrest and even death. In some countries nowadays to claim the name of Christ leads to being forced out of the family home,

shunned from all public educational institutions, limited on what jobs are available, and in some instances targeted for death.

The Christian life is not always popular, easy or smooth. If it was, our churches would be overflowing every weekend. There are ways our faith is portrayed that will embarrass us,

and places where faith equates suffering.

Yet, personally, I will not trade my faith in Jesus for anything. I know the one in whom I have put my trust. I trust God’s word to be true, and God’s presence with me no matter what I face,

and Jesus’ forgiving love and grace.

We have good news the world needs to hear, good news of forgiveness and identity, good news of hope and new life. If we are too ashamed to share our faith in Jesus, or to live for Jesus in the choices we make each day of our lives, how is anyone around us going to know Jesus?

Don’t be ashamed of Jesus Christ and the good news of our salvation. Don’t be ashamed to inherit and pass on a living faith. Don’t be ashamed to live for Jesus, in all you say and do.

**guard the good treasure**

The good news of Jesus is a priceless treasure. As Paul declared:

Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.” (v14)

Paul lived in a time before banks. So when a wealthy person went on a journey, they had to leave their riches, their property and their servants in the care of someone they fully trusted.

Yet Paul believed that as Christians we have something even greater than wealth—we have the treasure of God’s story lived out in Jesus, we have the treasure of God’s Word found in the Bible, we have the treasure of grace and love and faith and hope.

What will we do with such a treasure? With the help of the Holy Spirit, we are called to know it.

We are called to share it. We are called to live it. We are called to guard it.

In v 12 Paul proclaimed: “I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that God is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him.” (v12b)

This conviction is spoken in the perfect tense, describing a completed action with ongoing results.

…Paul’s trusting, knowing, and confidence of faith all stem from an experience in time,

an experience of encountering Jesus, and that experience continued to significantly shape

everything about his life, faith, and ministry.

 -Chelsey Harmon cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters 10-6-19 adapted

When we say yes to believing in and following Jesus, then our faith becomes a good treasure to guard, and not only guard but allow to influence all areas of our lives.

If you have never truly embraced this good news of Jesus in your life, if you have never said yes to God’s forgiveness of your sins and yes to new life as a follower of Jesus, wait no longer than this day to claim this good treasure as your own.

If you have found yourself wavering in your faith or embarrassed by your lack of faith, rekindle the gift of God within you this morning. Wait no longer to reclaim your call as a servant leader, a follower of Jesus, a member of the body of Christ.

Paul encourages all of us today:

1. rekindle the gift within you

2. don’t be ashamed

3. guard the good treasure

In a few moments we will tangibly celebrate the gift of God’s love through Jesus when we partake together of the sacrament of Holy Communion. Don’t be ashamed to share together in the bread and cup as a way to offer your thanks to Jesus as your Savior and as a way to be renewed for the journey of faith ahead.

As we come to the table, we also celebrate that we do not come alone. This is World Communion Sunday [weekend], a symbol of hope born amid the worldwide struggles of the 1940s. As communion then was celebrated infrequently, churches across several Protestant denominations chose the first weekend of October to celebrate and remember our common faith in Christ.

When we gather here today, we gather with brothers and sisters in Christ around the world,

across denominations, and surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. We gather with brothers and sisters in Christ who risk their lives to gather at the table, and brothers and sisters in Christ who gather in ease and safety.

Together, we are encouraged to keep the faith. Together, we are encouraged to not be ashamed of the good news of Jesus. Together, we are encouraged to live in such a way

that we constantly share with others how Jesus has made a difference in our lives.

“God did not give us a spirit of cowardice,

but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.” (v7)

Trust God’s presence, promises and power in your lives, so that we may live and serve not ashamed of the good news of Jesus!

May it be so. Let us pray.