

GIVING THANKS FOR THE BLESSIONS OF SALVATION

2 Timothy 3:14--4:5

TEXT: *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Many of you have heard the story. A few of you remember having been there. It was in March of 1983 and I had just arrived from my service at Calvary Lutheran Church in Chandler AZ to begin serving St. John's Lutheran. To gather my own perspective of the work that was being done here, I asked the council what their long range plans were and what were their short-range plans. Long range: To start a Lutheran Elementary School; short-range plan: to call a teacher for an opening of a school that coming fall of 1983. They say that where there is a will there is a way and that where there is no will, there is no way. But when it is the Lord's will, His blessings pour out upon His people. Today we are going to give Him thanks for 30 years of blessings poured out on the people of this congregation through 30 years of Lutheran Elementary Education here at St. John's. As Paul encouraged Timothy, a young pastor who was home-schooled in matters of faith and salvation, let us also give thanks for what we've learned, and thankful for those from whom we've learned it.

Our oldest child started her Kindergarten year in 1983 in St. John's first year of operation. Her classmates spanned grades K-4, and there were only 10 students in those grades. Each year a new Kindergarten class was added until our school had all eight grades plus Kindergarten. Years later, we accompanied our daughter on her search for a college. There were two colleges that were trying to win her enrollment: Alma College and Albion College. Both colleges tried to impress us with one feature in particular: a very low student/teacher ratio, like 1 teacher for every 10-20 students. That was considered a plus for a school of higher education. But our daughter had already been blessed with a low student/teacher ratio at St. John's. Her experience at St. John's was as close to "home schooling" as one could get. And we all know marvelously educated those students are who have the luxury of home schooling!

But is the blessing of a low student/teacher ratio that allows the blessing of such personal, almost one to one instruction the blessing that we taut in counting the blessings of our small school of 30 years? Is it the fact that there is no fear of drugs, sex and violence here like in large public schools? Is it the fact that my daughter would NEVER

have had the opportunity to play girls basketball in a larger school, but was able to enjoy and learn the experiences of playing sports and cheerleading, performing before an audience in school presentations because EVERYONE got to participate and compete? In our small school, EVERYONE had to participate and experience and learn. These are blessings that all parents covet for their children, these blessings have been here at our small school for the past 30 years.

But these blessings are nothing compared to the ONE THING NEEDFUL that Paul speaks about in this letter to Timothy who was home-schooled: ***But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.***

What good is being the wisest and most accomplished man in the world if you are not wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus? Ask Solomon whom Scripture says was indeed the wisest man ever to have lived. In addition to his wisdom and his astounding wealth and power, he also was a researcher, an inventor, a songwriter, a poet, a scientist, and zoologist. He wrote textbooks and kings from all over the world sent their wise men to learn from Solomon. Yet he said it was all vanity without God's salvation. In the end, all men rich and poor, get nothing but a shovel full of dirt in the face. But not you, Timothy! ***...continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*** Not you, children of St. John's Lutheran congregation! ***from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*** If you live to be 100 years old, divide that by an infinite number of years, either in heaven or hell, and consider the percentage of eternity that is 100 years! Now, how important is knowing that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose again for our justification? I would rather have my child die five minutes after his baptism, with the forgiveness of sins assured by God's written Word, than to have him live a life of wealth and ease without Jesus!

Let us be thankful for what we have learned by God's grace through the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ! And as Paul reminds Timothy, let us be thankful for those from whom we have learned it!

It's not just schools like ours, but in the homes of Christian parents and grandparents that the blessings of salvation are learned. Paul told Timothy: ***...continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*** It's often assumed that Timothy's father may have been already dead because he is not mentioned. But it's also possible that he was not a Christian. Earlier Paul writes: ***I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.*** It is said that it rare to have the saving faith continues in the hearts of anyone's descendants beyond the third generation.

Sadly, that statistic seems to be true. From whom did you learn the way of salvation? Did it pass down to you from your grandparents and parents? Are you passing the faith on to your children and grandchildren? How has your family fared in

matters of faith and salvation? How many of your siblings still hold to the truth? How many of your nieces and nephews have continued in the way of the Third Commandment that teaches that **We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and God's Word. But hold it sacred and GLADLY hear and learn it...?**

Paul told Timothy that the time would come, and it now is, that *the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations...*

Do I need to go into detail about how people who once professed to be Christian are not being lured away from God's truth, away from the heritage of faith passed down to them from their fathers because of those worldly teachers saying what sinful minds and hearts like to hear?

Paul told Timothy to keep his head in all situations, and that's divine advice to us. We thank God for the blessings of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, but who will keep the faith in these last days? Only those moms and dads, grandpas and grandmas, husbands and wives who KEEP THEIR HEADS and hearts focused on this one great blessing that is in our congregation and in our homes: The Scriptures! The world despises this passage and my Old Adam finds it hard to believe, but the truth is as Paul writes: *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* Math and science are important studies because God created math and science. But ONLY the Gospel empowers our children to use these things to the glory of God. Only the Gospel of sin forgiven in Jesus' name and eternal life assured by His resurrection is able to create and nourish the faith that saves souls for eternity. Only the inspired Word of God will move our children and grandchildren to want for themselves and their children and grandchildren what we have received and have passed on to them.

Today we give thanks for God's gracious calling to faith in Jesus. For 30 years we have had this blessing in our congregation through a Lutheran Elementary School. May God keep that among us until He comes! Amen.