

“Now is the time to fulfill your ministry”

2 Timothy 4:1-5

Well, last month when I preached, we were in the last chapter of first Timothy and today we will be in the last chapter of second Timothy. So, if you have your Bibles, open them up to 2 Timothy chapter four. And in this closing chapter from Paul to Timothy, what Paul tells Timothy is something I think we all desperately need to hear today; it is so important. God has called all of us to a life of action. We are not to be idle. We are not to sit on the bench and watch everyone else play. We are not to just look at the puzzle box, but we are to open it up, work on it daily, and strive to put it together. But, as we all know, life is hard, life is difficult, life is messy; and so often we get consumed with the day-to-day grind. And because of all of that we lose track of what we should be doing. Hopefully this morning we will realize that we need to make the most of our time and do what God has called us to do; we need to work hard to fulfill the ministries that God has given us!

So, Paul wrote 13 letters total, but this would be his last. It's unbelievable that the words he wrote in a cold dirty dungeon thousands of years ago would be so meaningful to us today, but that's God's Word. God's Word is powerful. God's Word speaks! So, right before Paul dies under the persecution of Nero, he writes to his good friend and son in the faith Timothy. So, Paul is passing the baton, he is passing the torch here to Timothy. Paul knew he would die soon so he writes to instruct this young pastor how to lead his flock in Ephesus.

So, before Paul is beheaded for his faith, he writes these words as a final charge to Timothy, he writes, (2 Timothy 4:1-2) “I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of His appearing and His kingdom: ²Proclaim the message; persist in it whether convenient or not; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching.”

Paul is encouraging Timothy to go all out for Jesus. And this should be a huge encouragement to us as well. And these are not just words he wrote down that sounded nice, he truly lived them out in his life. Scripture tells us that Paul was sent to prison several times for Jesus, beaten nearly to death several times for Jesus, stoned, was shipwrecked three times, and was

in danger on many of his journeys for Jesus. He had many sleepless nights. He went without food and drink and often was cold and lacked clothing and was homeless at times for Jesus. He was reviled, persecuted, and slandered. But to Paul, it was all worth it because he was saved by Jesus, and he knew that people had to hear the good news about Jesus. He was willing to die for the gospel. Paul tells Timothy in chapter one, (2 Timothy 1:8-12) "So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me His prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.⁹ He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. ¹⁰This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher, ¹²and that is why I suffer these things..." Suffering for Jesus, giving his all for Jesus, was normal life to Paul and should be normal life for us as well.

(Verse 1) So, Paul gives this final charge to Timothy. And this charge was urgent and serious, and we need to take this call to action serious in our lives too. And what a charge this is. It's difficult to see how Paul could have made this charge to Timothy any weightier. So, Paul urges Timothy, not only in the name of the God of the universe, but of Jesus who is the Judge of all. Every person will bow before Him and give an account of everything he or she has done. Also, in view of the fact that Jesus will return again and that He will set up His kingdom, Paul gives this charge to Timothy. So, Timothy was being charged by Paul to go all out in his ministry with God the Father, Jesus, Christ's return, and the coming kingdom in view as he ministers. One commentator said, "Our work must be such that it will stand the scrutiny of Christ. Our lives must be such that they will welcome the appearance of the King. Our service must be such that it will demonstrate the reality of our citizenship of the Kingdom of God." This was a serious charge to Timothy.

So, for us today, we have to ask ourselves, what's my ministry? What am I doing for the kingdom? If Jesus is coming back soon, will He find me working hard for Him and ministering to others or not? And for all believers, God has given all of us spiritual gifts. And these gifts should

be used to draw people closer to Jesus. For an example, the gift of prophecy, service, hospitality, teaching, encouragement, giving, leading, showing mercy, the gift of wisdom and knowledge, the gift of faith, healing, performing miracles, discernment, speaking different languages, and interpreting languages. Are we using our gifts? (Ephesians 4:11) Also, "...He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ." So, we are all in ministry. God has gifted all of us and put us where He wants us to point people to Jesus. So, no matter where you work, you should use your gifts to minister to those around you. Again, this is serious stuff. Especially now, more than ever. Christianity is on the decline in America, truth is being ripped out of our culture, good is bad, and bad is good. And it seems like everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes. As ministers, whatever platform the Lord has given us, we need to use it to point people to the truth. This is an urgent charge for all of us today!

(Verse 2) Now in verse two, Paul tells Timothy how to live out this charge, "Proclaim the message; persist in it whether convenient or not; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching." Again, you can feel the urgency in every word Paul writes. And as there was great urgency in Paul's day, there is great urgency for us today as well. Timothy was a young pastor, and Paul was telling him how to do ministry. First step, he was to proclaim the message; he was to proclaim truth. That word "proclaim" here means to be a herald. So, Timothy was to be a messenger, an announcer; someone who proclaims and preaches the truth of God's Word. And this required standing up. This required rejecting passivity. This required standing in front of somebody, opening his mouth, and speaking truth. Which, most of the time, the other person doesn't want to hear. That's hard stuff, but he was to be bold and proclaim truth, and we must do the same.

Our culture is spinning out of control. Truth—what is truth anymore? We have no idea what male and female is anymore. Males can play female sports, males can use female bathrooms, and the world says, "that sounds right, what's wrong with that?" California became the first state to mandate gender-neutral toy aisles-the world says, "what's wrong with that?" The Lego

company just announced that they are in the process of getting rid of all gender bias in their toys. Soon, parents won't be able to find Legos for boys or girls on their website; everything will just be neutral. DC comics just announced that the new Superman will be bisexual. And apparently, the word "guys" is offensive so we're trying to get rid of that word. Our culture is spinning out of control. Not to mention that 35 percent of downloads on the internet is porn. And it seems like violence, hatred, and especially division are escalating in our country. Timothy needed to be a herald in his day, and we need to be a herald in ours. The devil is putting in the hours to deceive, twist truth, and spread lies. So, we need to be working overtime as well to spread truth.

And the greatest truth that this world needs to hear is the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ; His death, burial, and resurrection. They need to hear that Jesus died on a cross 2000 years ago for them. That only through Jesus can they be saved, forgiven, and have eternal life. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus is what this world desperately needs. So, getting the gospel out, people hearing the gospel, and people receiving the gospel, is the only way to win back our culture. We need to be people like Timothy who proclaim the truth.

And as Timothy proclaimed God's Word, he was not to stop, but he was to persist in it whether convenient or not. Timothy was to push into his culture. He was to talk to people about Jesus if it was convenient or not. This doesn't mean he was to be mean, rude, obnoxious, or unloving. But, he was to be constant in trying to get the gospel out and trying to get the truths of God's Word out. And as our culture is turning more and more away from God, we too have to persist in this. And unfortunately, most of the time it's not convenient. Life is busy and everybody is in a rush. If you're at a restaurant, the grocery store, the gas station, at work, at school, or even at home, there never seems to be a good time to have these types of talks. But, we need to persist in it; we can't give up. And we know that the Devil is persisting in trying to get us to NOT do this. The last thing the enemy wants us to do is to share the gospel and point people to God's Word. So, this is work; this is hard work; but this should be our goal. We have the truth that this world needs to hear; we've got to get it out.

I love the story of Billy Graham going to England for the Greater London Crusade in 1954. Him and his team spent months and months planning and preparing for this crusade. Finally, on March 1, the crusade was planned to start. But, throughout the day there was heavy rain and sleet. Graham and his team doubted anyone who come due to the weather; so they prayed. The arena that night held 12,000 people, but an hour before the crusade only 2,000 people were there. But, by the time it began, it was filled to capacity and 200 people came forward to receive Jesus that night.

Then, for three months straight, every night, Graham held nightly meetings. Each night brought larger crowds; God was doing a mighty work. Then on May 22, 1954, the last day of the crusade came. By this time, Billy was exhausted and again, the weather was terrible. The stadium that night held 100,000 and was filled to capacity. Plus, there was 22,000 people outside the stadium. Graham did not know how he was going to have the strength to preach because he was so tired, but God gave him the strength. That night over 2,000 people came forward to receive Jesus.

During the whole crusade, Graham preached to more than 1.5 million people with 38,000 receiving Jesus as their Lord and Savior. And it doesn't end there, over the next 35 years Graham went back and did 7 more crusades in London preaching to over 9 million people total with 320,000 coming forward to receive Jesus. Persistence! All the planning, all the years, tired, terrible weather, and being away from home, and the outcome—God's Word was proclaimed; he was persistent!

And as Timothy persisted in proclaiming the message of truth, at times this meant he would have to rebuke and correct those who were in sin. Again, difficult conversations to have and most of us try to AVOID these; but they are very much needed. And let me just say, when we have these conversations, there is no room for pride, arrogance, or harshness. We are all sinners, we've all messed up, we all need correction, and we all need grace. So, we should approach these conversations with love and gentleness.

Again, we're all in the same boat here, we've all sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. Even Paul considered himself the worst of sinners. He says this about himself, (Romans 7:15) "For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate." I think we all understand this; we know what is right, but we do the wrong thing so often. So, when we go to someone to rebuke or to correct, we should not do it in a harsh, judging, pointing the finger kind of way, but as Paul tells us in Galatians 6, (6:1) "Brothers, if someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit." We should be gentle and loving as we rebuke and correct. And as sin is becoming more and more acceptable in our culture, we will mostly likely need to have more and more of these conversations.

And on a side note, loving and gentle correction towards our children is so important. Paul writes, (Ephesians 6:4) "And fathers, don't stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Our words should stir up conviction of sin and encouragement, not anger. Also, Paul writes, (Colossians 3:21) "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so they won't become discouraged." Before talking to our children, we need to pray for the Holy Spirit to speak through us. We want our children to hear gentle, loving, correction from us and be encouraged, instead of discouraged. Again, these are hard conversations to have, but we must constantly, gently, lovingly, point our children to the truth.

Finally, in ministry, Timothy was to be an encouragement to those around him. One thing that hasn't changed from Paul's day to ours, is that we all need encouragement. It's so easy to get discouraged as we see all that is going on in the world, and even in our own lives. Life is hard and so often full of pain and tears. Marriage at times is hard, raising children especially in this culture today is hard, many of us have huge financial burdens, health issues, and relationship struggles. Many go throughout their day in physical pain and many live with an addiction, and they just can't stop. And the list can go on of the weight that people carry around with them daily. And because of this, many can then start to feel discouraged. Timothy was to encourage those around him, and we need to do the same. And that requires us to get our eyes off of ourselves. There are hurting, discouraged people all around us that desperately need words of

encouragement from us. And as we proclaim, persist, rebuke, correct, and encourage, we do it all with great patience and teaching. So, this is ministry in one verse-pointing people to the truth.

(verses 3-4) But, as we know, pointing people to the truth is an uphill battle and there are many they don't want the truth, Paul writes, "For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear something new. ⁴They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths."

Paul warns Timothy here about false teachers. This was a problem in his day and is definitely a problem in ours. There are churches, pastors, and teachers today that preach a false gospel, a watered-down gospel, they minimize sin, minimize hell, or say that it doesn't even exist; bottom line these teachers clearly teach things that go against God's Word. And so many people want this. They don't want the truth because then they would have to change their lives; they would have to submit to God and give up their own desires. So, what do they do? They find teachers who will teach them what they want to hear. Instead of turning to the truth, which would set them free, which would help them, and which would actually give them real LIFE, they turn to myths, which is a fable or a tale. It's a made-up story, not true, just a made-up tale. They would rather hear that instead of the truth. Because again, that is easy to hear; it's comfortable and this doesn't require any change or submitting to God. They think their ways are the best, which is just another lie they are believing. God's ways, His truth is always the best thing for us!

And the Bible is full of warnings against these false teachers, (Matthew 7:15-16) Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves. ¹⁶You'll recognize them by their fruit..." Peter says, (2 Peter 2:1) "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, and will bring swift destruction on themselves." Jude (Jude 1:4) says that they "...have come in by

stealth; they are ungodly, turning the grace of our God into promiscuity and denying Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord.”

So, Timothy was to stand strong in the truth. He was to defend truth; he was to protect the church from these false teachers. Truth is so important; without it, everybody can do just whatever they feel is right in their own eyes. And that is where our culture is today. So today, you and me need to stand for and protect truth. And if we look at Paul’s first and second letters to Timothy, we would find that Paul talked about truth 5 times in the first letter, and 6 times here in the second. Obviously, he was very concerned about people knowing the truth and living in the truth. And let me just say for us today, we live in a time that we have so much access to God’s Word, but so many don’t dive into it. My encouragement to you today is to make God’s Word a priority in your life. Read it, even if it’s a chapter a day so that you can know truth. That way when the devil comes with his lies, you can immediately recognize the lies and reject them.

And the devil will not stop. He knows his time is short, so he is going all out right now. He’s going to lie to us, he is going to deceive, he will do everything possible to trip us up, he will do whatever he can to pull us away from God and godly living. So, Peter encourages us to (2 Peter 5:8-9) “Be serious! Be alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. ⁹ Resist him and be firm in the faith...” We are to say “no” to his tricks. Paul tells us in Ephesians (6:10-11) “Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength. Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil.” We must know the truth and be ready for his attacks because they are coming at us daily.

(verse 5) But, in contrast to these false teachers, Paul tells Timothy to be different, he says, “But as for you, keep a clear head about everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

If you want a life verse, here it is. (read it again) This is something we all should be striving to do in our lives. As Timothy is leading the church and as he is living out his faith, he is to keep a clear

head about everything. Being a Christian in this world is hard. It's like trying to swim upstream, it's difficult. But, Timothy was to watch, be sober, and be alert. In other words, he was to stay focused; with all this world throws at us, all the attacks from the enemy, and with the pull of our own sin nature, we are to stay focused on what we are called to do. A Nascar racer hits speeds of up to 200 mph, he has to stay focused. He doesn't have time to look at the clouds, wave to the fans, or drink a cup of coffee while he's driving, because if he does, he will crash. He needs to keep his eyes on the prize. He has to be clear headed and focused on the what's right in front of him if he wants to win. Same is true for us today, we can't get distracted with the things of this world, we must stay focused on the ministry God has given us to do!

And in living this out, Paul tells Timothy to endure hardship. There is no way of getting through this life without difficulties, especially if you are a Christian. So many think that if you are Christian life should be easy and pain free and they are shocked when hard times come, but it's the opposite, we are promised sufferings in this world. So, when they come, Timothy was to endure them. He was not get discouraged. He was not to run away from the problem. He was not to lock himself up in his house. But, he was to engage. He was to step up; step into the situation, not run from it. As we live out our faith, as we share the gospel, and as we stand for truth, life will become harder and harder. And whatever difficulties come because of this, we are to endure, we are to press on, we are not to grow weary in doing good, we are to fight the good fight.

And as Timothy did this, he was to do the work of an evangelist. Most likely this was one of Timothy's gifts, the gift of evangelism, but as the pastor of the church, he needed to lead by example in sharing his faith even if this wasn't one of his gifts. We are all commanded to go and share the gospel and make disciples. So, he needed to be a soul winner. And when was he to proclaim the gospel-every opportunity that he had. Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ was a top priority.

And for us today, again, more than ever, we need to proclaim the gospel every opportunity that we have. In 1990 85% of adults in the US identified as a Christian, only 30 years later, in 2020,

65% of adults identified as a Christian. If this trend continues, there is no telling what America will look like 30 years from now, it's a scary thought; and that's a lot of people going to hell. Sharing the gospel, probably the most basic part of being a Christian, is something that we all need to be doing on a regular basis. This is hard, but we have to be willing to get out of our comfort zone, be willing to have our day interrupted, and be willing give up our time. In other words, denying self, picking up our crosses, and following Jesus. Are we willing to do that? Are you willing to do that? Paul said in the book of Romans, (1:16) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek." There is power in the good news of Jesus Christ, and we must boldly proclaim it.

So, with all of that being said, Paul tells Timothy to fulfill your ministry. Timothy was to work hard to accomplish everything Paul had told him. He was to be faithful and focused. And it's interesting, this word ministry in Greek is, diakonia (dee-ak-on-ee-ah); which means to be a servant or to serve. This where we get the word deacon from. So, Timothy was to work hard in his service to Jesus. Jesus is the King of kings; He is God, He is Master, He is Lord, He is Savior, He is the Messiah, He is Creator, He is the Alpha and Omega, He is the lamb of God, and He is the great I Am. It makes sense that we should listen to Him, obey Him, follow Him, and spend our lives serving Him. But, so often we get it backwards, we think we are God, we're the king, and we can just do whatever we want to do and live the way we want to live. Paul is encouraging Timothy and us to spend your life serving Jesus; the One who died for us.

So, what is that ministry for you? I don't know, but I encourage you to find out and then work hard to fulfill it. Maybe it's becoming a missionary in Kenya, maybe it's staying home and pouring into your children while they're young, maybe it's starting a Bible study at your work-place, maybe it's serving in our youth group, or in our children's program; maybe its hospitality and opening up your home to people and events; whatever it is, do it with all of your heart. And hopefully in the end when we stand before Jesus, we will all hear the words that we all want to hear, "Well done good and faithful servant, well done!"

George Whitfield was truly a man who lived this out in his life and I'm sure he heard those words when he stood before Jesus, "Well done good and faithful servant." George was the greatest preacher of the eighteenth century. Born in England in 1714, entered Oxford in 1734, and then devoted his life to preaching after that. He spent most of his time preaching outdoors. He preached throughout England and made 14 trips to Scotland and 7 to America. He regularly delivered as many as 20 sermons a week.

In 1770 he was in America preaching, and in September he was in New Hampshire preaching, which would be his last. Sick and not well, he made it up the platform to preach. And as he stood there an elderly gentleman said to him, "Sir, you are more fit to go to bed than to preach." Whitfield said, "True, sir." He then looked to heaven and prayed that the Lord would give him strength to preach. He stood there several minutes unable to speak, then the Lord gave him the strength; he went on to preach for 2 hours on one verse.

That night, he went to stay at a friend's house. He arrived, exhausted, tired, and sick. But, as he approached the house, a huge crowd had gathered to hear him preach again. So, he did. He preached all night until the candle in his hand burned out. That night, sick and not feeling well, the young man who traveled with him to help him got on George, "if you didn't preach so much you probably wouldn't be so sick-you need rest." Whitfield fired back, "I would rather wear out, than rust out." Those would be some of his last words that he would say. The next morning at 7am he passed away. George was faithful until the end. He proclaimed, he persisted, and he fulfilled his ministry.

So, may we take Paul's words to heart and go all out in our service to our God. Life is short, so we need to make the most of our time and do what God has called us to do; we need to work hard to fulfill the ministries that he has given us!

Title: "Now is the time to fulfill your ministry"

Text: 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Worship: The King is coming!

Preaching date: November 14th, 2021

Key Sentence: "We need to make the most of our time and do what God has called us to do; we need to fulfill our ministry!"

Outline:

I. Move forward in Ministry (2 Timothy 4:1-2)

II. Difficulties of Ministry (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

III. Fulfill your Ministry (2 Timothy 4:5)

Notes:

1. Worship: (worship time should be just songs that exalt Jesus). Jesus should be our focus. Living our lives for Jesus. Enduring until the end. Striving to fulfill the ministry God has given us. We are to live a life of service for our King.
2. Scripture for bulletin: Call to worship-(Holman Christian Standard Bible) Philippians 2:12-13, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Matthew 24:44, and Hebrews 10:24-25.
Scripture of Meditation- Ephesians 4:11-12, Colossians 4:17, and 2 Timothy 4:6-8.
3. Children's Corner: "Who likes puzzles?"
4. Visuals: Puzzles, puzzle pieces, finishing a puzzle.
5. Prayer week: David plays guitar in the background.
6. Sign: "God has given all of us a ministry to fulfill" 2 Timothy 4:1-5
7. Bulletin: Stack 4, 19B7, "Whom shall I send...Who will go for us?"

Prayer week

Puzzle Making!

2 Timothy 4:1-2, Pray for help in living this out!

2 Timothy 4:3-4, Pray for those that you know that have turned
away from the truth!

2 Timothy 4:5, Pray for God to make it clear what your ministry
is and pray for God to help you to fulfill it!