



Dear friends,

We are living in a world full of noises, overstimulated by news, gripped by human suffering something experienced by millions and millions of people living in refugee camps, displays of war on a day to day basis for years. Now, we are being forced off the street, to stay home, cooped up, not by shelling and gun fights, but by our care for others and in some countries; by a decree of the government. We have a quiet time to reevaluate our priorities, allowing us to listen afresh to God's word. And perhaps we, the people of God can bring not normalcy but Good News to our neighbors.

I still go shopping, and I realize that the young girl at the checkout is my neighbor. What am I going to say to her, what am I going to do for her in a time such as this?

I am not sure if you are following our daily Bible reading Plan, if you do, you would have heard the following in 1 Timothy;

“Don't let them waste their time in endless discussion of myths and spiritual pedigrees. These things only lead to meaningless speculations, which don't help people live a life of faith in God.”

Pauls' words are still true today ... though not one of the original Twelve Disciples, but rather someone “born at the wrong time” (1 Cor 15:8), his words are timeless. He spoke, wrote, and lived in light of the Light which not only interrupted his journey to Damascus, but which transformed his entire life. He is a man with a mission, with a mission of God, no longer listening to the noises of the world but to the voice of God. And so he is on a mission, a mission he attempts to pass on to the reader, the listeners of his words.

Yes, it is true, Paul writes to a church torn by controversy some two thousand years ago. But his emphasis is not the controversy of that time, how they got there and what it was all about. Rather his focus is **living a**

life of faith, of trust, of love of others and of God, something of eternal value and importance. Kingdom building was on the heart of Paul, the Kingdom of God not the kingdom of some people who may think they have all the answers. Paul was so intent on making the point that he never actually completed the sentence ...”As I urged you to stay on (v.3)... Just as the text of the Church, the message of the Church, the Good News was under attack then, it is under attack today. Then, Paul’s weapon of choice was the text, our weapon of choice is not the N95 mask or disinfectant but speaking the text. “Preaching up a storm” is an old expression, and perhaps you are familiar with it, but it is much harder to preach in and through a storm. It is in a time such as we are experiencing worldwide, in time of local, regional, national and international crisis that people need to be able to look to the people of God for a word from God.

True again, Paul deals in his letter with a doctrinal crisis, and so the corrective was doctrinal preaching. However, we live in a day when theology, when the notion of God is not considered PC – Politically correct or pastorally correct. For many, the text of the church and its theology is at best (for some) irrelevant, at worst divisive, and even hurtful rather than hopeful.

Paul is exactly that, even in a crisis, hopeful, encouraging, forward looking and therefore he urges the church not simply to rebut wrong views about the text, about God’s word to us...as if God’s love to us is dwindling because circumstances are less favorable. And so Paul prays;

“So, we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of His call. May He give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do.”

Paul points us to a lifestyle of love flowing by faith from a pure heart along the path of good conscience...holiness in action. Good, sound, biblical God-talk is the life-blood for our lives...**as we carry God’s mercy, grace and even peace into a world turmoiled and confused.**

Grace is related to God’s love to his creation, He gives what we don’t deserve. On the other hand, **Mercy** is also related to God’s very nature. He is full of mercy, merciful, and we don’t get what we deserve. **Peace**, is the result, is our emotional and spiritual state of a person blessed with **Mercy** and **Grace**. And it is Paul’s prayer for all his readers, even the readers of today. So perhaps before you go shopping asked God “How can I be a blessing to the person at the check-out” today?

**May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy,
and peace.**

Manfred

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