

Sermon for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost: September 22, 2013
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Most of the time it's easy to say, I believe everything the Bible says—It's God's Word and I'll be proud to talk about it to anyone who asks. The Bible shows me Jesus Christ and it fills me with His love and who can ever be upset at that? Then, there are those passages that are confusing, or not as clear, or even downright offensive-sounding. And now my pride gives way to anger or embarrassment—How can the Apostle Paul, who can write such lovely words about God's love, then turn around and make what seems to be arbitrary restrictions against women?

You know it's not an option for you to pick and choose what you want the Bible to say—it's all God's Word even if you don't understand it. And if you refuse to accept any part of it, then you've rejected the whole thing as nonsense. Maybe you know someone who just can't stomach some things that Scripture says and so they stay away from it and do their own thing, even though they may be aware that this is doing damage to their faith in Christ. It can get quite difficult to wrestle with a teaching of the Scriptures that gets the Church and all faithful Christians into trouble with the ways of this world. It was not a comfortable task for me to read the Epistle, 1 Timothy 2. I, too, fret in my feeble, sinful heart that Paul's words will be taken as offensive and people will prefer rather to tear those pages out of the Bible—that it doesn't apply to us today! We're in a different time now. Those restrictions need to change, or at least we need to interpret them differently. Those are potentially dangerous things to say about God's Word.

What becomes a problem for us as we are still under the constant attack and influence of our sinful human nature, is for us to perceive when it is appropriate to receive and accept the gifts of our Lord, and when it is time to serve our Lord. We want to do both only in our own way, and on our own agenda and schedule. The world has not gotten less attention-hungry, but instead has now in the last 10-15 years exploded into a whole new universe of "Look at me! Pay attention to me! Listen to what I have to say, because I'm the important one in this virtual world!" Every opinion is equally valid, which also means nothing is considered true, either. Someone is being hateful if their words sound the very least like a distinction, or a comparison, or a claim for truth is being made. How dare you forbid me from expressing myself! And Satan, our third enemy, just loves the chaos that these problems make and the way our own fighting over receiving and serving falls right in line with his purposes as he tries to tear the Church apart.

Thankfully, God is always making it clear through His Apostles and Prophets when it is appropriate to receive and when it is appropriate to give or serve. Even though receiving is primary, it's still not always about receiving, just as much as it isn't all about giving. Before the Apostle Paul started to make your blood boil with indignation, I'll remind you of what he wrote near the beginning of 1 Timothy chapter 2: "There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony

given at the proper time.” That’s the Gospel gift that Jesus came to give—Himself. He sacrificed Himself for your sake, since you are included in that little word all. You are the Church, the Bride of Christ, and He is your Man, your Mediator, your husband, who leads you—who is your Head—precisely by serving you and offering His life as your rescuing ransom.

This was His will, His testimony, locked up in the mysteries of the mind of God before all ages, prophesied throughout the time of the Old Testament, and finally revealed at the proper time when Jesus appeared on the scene. Our Savior did not show up as an afterthought, like it was some new plan that the Lord cooked up just because we ruined His recipe with our sin. He wanted to love us by giving up Himself, ever since He had it in mind to create the world and take a walk through the Garden of Eden. He placed that loving, perfect image like a stamp on mankind, and in Christ He restores that image in the faith and life of all who believe in Him. He created Eve out of Adam’s side, not only so that the world would be populated and people would be fruitful and multiply, but also to depict for us that the Church would be built up from the sacrificial side of Jesus, cleansed and beautified for marriage not with temporary outward adornments that will tarnish and fade away, but with perfect faith in our Lord, produced in our hearts when we hear the Gospel of His death for our salvation.

And to make that happen in your life today, to bring that long-ago ransom that Jesus paid in blood on the cross, and hand it out in twenty-first century Kansas City,

Missouri, the Lord set apart an order, a vocation of His own design. It was His will to call a preacher of the Word in a particular place, one who would speak the Words of God that are powerful Words just like those He spoke long ago when He created the world and everything in it. Jesus said He was sent to speak only the Words of the heavenly Father. After His resurrection He then sent His apostles to speak His Words as if His own mouth were speaking through them. Jesus did not enter our world as a genderless, generic “person” or “human being”—He became Man. The masculine gender was not an accident, or a concession to the realities of society at the time, but an accurate depiction of the Gospel that God decided to proclaim for His sin-sick world. He chose to give as a higher priority than to receive. It was His will to create and give out of pure grace. He made the choice for us to be part of His kingdom.

That’s why He in His wisdom alone chose to depict that timeless truth in masculine personal terms. It’s what we’re talking about when we say that Scripture speaks of an order of creation. Nothing acted upon God in order to force Him to give birth to the world—that would have introduced a feminine concept to creation, and thus it would have made the world itself into a divine being with a life-force that is impossible to avoid in some religions like New Age, for instance, or any of the pagan religions that God had told His people repeatedly, have nothing to do with the way those people worship. That’s not how I choose to deal with you, as if I were to force you to serve Me.

The public, preaching of the Word for the Church gathered in a particular place for the Divine Service—that's the teaching that Saint Paul means when he says those harsh-sounding words, I do not permit a woman to teach. He's talking about teaching in here, at this time, not out there. If your calling, your vocation at a particular time is to receive, then you are rebelling against God if you force your way into giving instead. The flip side works out there also—when you are called to serve your neighbor out there, then sitting on your hands, demanding on your rights from your neighbors and not showing love to them—that is a serious offense against the Lord who has given you your neighbor to serve over and above yourself.

To be sure, serving in here looks good, and you're using your talents, so you think, and acting so humbly that everyone takes notice—but if this is the moment you are supposed to be letting God serve you, as He does in here, then it is no different than spitting in His face. For His task of serving you with His Gospel Word, the Lord has called a certain, trained and qualified man to stand in His place and speak His authorized forgiveness for you. Your pastor is not a different kind of Christian than you are, because in Christ we in all of our distinctions and differences have all been made one. Your pastor receives the Gospel in the same way that you do, from a man who has Christ's authority to speak in His stead and by His command. That's the authority that may not be exercised or taken away, talking about in here, in the public services of God's Word and Sacrament, whether it would be by a woman or by a man who has not been fully

taught, called and ordained. If that order and authority is destroyed, then the will of God to save the world and let all come to the knowledge of the truth will be obstructed.

Our merciful God sets distinctions and limits not on those who receive His Word and the forgiveness of sins, but upon those who wish to occupy His office of ministry and give His gifts and proclaim His Word in His stead to others. The limits are not limitations on His love for you, whether you are a woman or a man, they are instead a way that He ensures that His pure Word for your salvation is not compromised. Just because the one tree in the whole Garden of Eden was off-limits because of the command of the Lord, that did not mean that all the other trees were also forbidden—but that's exactly how the serpent deceived Eve. “God must not love you, did He really say you can't eat fruit from *any* tree? How unreasonable God is!”

The same thing happens in this question, and Satan is just as much at work: “God says women can't be pastors, so that must mean that God doesn't want women to serve others in *any* other way, as well!” No, there are millions and millions of other ways to serve—outside of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, when and where it is appropriate to give and serve. When it is time to receive, let Jesus place in front of you His called and authorized man who stands in His place. When that Service is over, then pray for your Savior to place you into your specific calling, that's when you serve Him by serving others, and not by trying to take over an office, a vocation that God has not given you.

So why focus on the negative? Why are we discontent because of something God has not given us? Turn instead with a thankful heart toward all that Christ Jesus has done for you. Trust in Him rather than in yourself. He has brought you into His holy house to lift up hands that have been made holy through the forgiveness you receive. We lift up our hearts together to receive the gifts of the cross and to pray for a peaceful and quiet life in this world that is beset with sin. Jesus has purchased and ransomed you with His Blood, and cleansed you as a radiant, beautifully ornate Bride—adorned with faith and good works. If anything you wear speaks opposition to God’s Word and draws attention only to yourself, then it is a sign that you are rejecting that Word and insisting on the worship of yourself instead. If you simply want to look nice in a modest enough way as you appear before the exalted throne of your heavenly Father, then go ahead and look your Sunday best with the Lord’s blessing upon you, which is even nicer.

And although not all of the Scripture is easy to hear at times, and even can make you upset, it is all given to you so that you may receive the Gospel of forgiveness, and not just be entertained with a motivational speech of the law. If worldly wisdom and “how-to” is all you expect from a pastor, then the limitations of 1 Timothy 2 certainly will not make any sense, ever. But if you desire the Word of the Father, who gives Himself to you through His Son, and strengthens you in the steadfast Faith by the work of the Holy Spirit, then you have come to the right place. For in here the Lord gives you those gifts that you

need to receive, and out there your neighbors receive the Love of God that He has designed for you to give in His name.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.