

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: *This is Good*

Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Date: January 2nd, 2022

Shaun: Good morning! Those of you here in this room, thank you for coming to this gathering of the Five Forks Church, and to those of you out there joining us on the live stream, we'd like to welcome you as well.

This is a special morning, as we come together for the first time in 2022.

Bill: That's right...and if this is your first time visiting or tuning in, our normal practice is for one of us – Shaun, Ray or myself - to bring the morning message. But we thought this being the first Sunday of the year, that it might be a good opportunity to do something a little different to get things started.

Ray: A little different, but not unheard of. Some of you were here back in August when the three of us came together to bring a message of **Hope** (*Bring up Unswervingly Slide*), and some of you indicated that you wouldn't mind us doing this again from time to time...and we kind of enjoyed it...so let's see where the Lord takes us this morning.

This morning's message is titled **This is Good**, these were words written by the apostle Paul in his first letter to his young protégé, Timothy.

Shaun: Before we look at that letter, I'd like to begin by asking you this question: "Are you okay with having your picture taken?" Or are you one of those who says, "No way, get that camera out of my face!"

If I said to those of you in this room: "Those of you who are okay with having your picture taken, get up and go over to this side of the room"....and "Those of you who don't like having your picture taken go to that side of the room"....where do you think most people would end up?"

Dad, what did you say when Bill asked us this question a couple of weeks ago?

Ray: I said I remember hearing that people like *seeing* pictures of themselves, people usually look first, for themselves, in pictures, but most people do not like *having* their picture taken. And so I think we might have more people on the side of *not* wanting to have their picture taken.

Bill: Which I found surprising, because 20 years ago, no one would know what I was talking about if I used the word “Selfie”. Nowadays I think just about everybody knows that a selfie is a picture that people take of themselves...and from my limited observation, it seems like a lot of selfies are getting taken these days...and so I’m thinking there might be more people over on that side of the room.

Shaun: While there will always be those who will head to the back row when pictures have to be taken, there are those who not only don’t mind having their picture taken, but they will actually “mug” for the camera, and make crazy gestures and faces when the camera is on them.

Ray: If you’ve ever been to a professional sporting event you know that sometimes they will entertain the crowd by zooming a camera in on a small group of people in the stands and show it up on this huge scoreboard.

And so everybody’s watching the scoreboard, jumping around and waving and acting crazy, hoping that the camera will spot them and show them up on the jumbo screen. And if it does, they’ll start jumping twice as high and begin waving twice as fast...they’ll start getting everybody’s attention around them...”Look, there we are! Let’s act weird!”

Bill: Yeah, I’ve been to a good many games through the years, and when they do that, I’m saying to myself, they better not put the camera on me, because if they do, they’re going to be disappointed because they aren’t getting nothing.

But back to what Shaun and Ray are saying, there is this Wal-Mart Holiday commercial that’s getting a lot of play on TV these days.. The theme is a “joy-filled Christmas” with all these short clips of friend and family **experiencing joy**, having fun...including – as you can

see – numerous shots of people mugging for the camera...like Shaun said, crazy gestures, weird faces...it's what we do.

Shaun: And this is good...I think God delights in our delight...I think He smiles when He sees friends and family experiencing joy together, having fun, bonding, and sometimes making memories that last a lifetime.

Bill: Yeah, sometimes we just need to be able to goof around, get a little silly and laugh hysterically at times.

And yet, there are also times when it's good to slow down, take a breath, and live and act another way.

There's a verse in the Bible that came before me on two different occasions in 2021. The first time it came to me in an email...I was corresponding with someone in our church family and at one point during our exchange, this person shared this verse with me, from I Timothy, chapter 2...

I Timothy 2:2b ...that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

And I remember thinking to myself, "Huh, that's interesting." I've read I Timothy before, on numerous occasions, but never really noticed those words, or at least took the time to think about them.

Then about two months ago, I signed up to get a "Verse of the Day" from a website called Bible Gateway. You can have the verse sent to you at whatever time of day you choose, and so I put down that I wanted to get it within the first 5 minutes of when I get up in the morning...something to reflect on while I'm just starting to move around.

So every morning I started getting this notification on my phone, letting me know that the verse of the day had been sent. The very first week I opened it up one morning and there were those words again:...*"that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."*

Ray: We seem to be living in a time where peace and quiet.. are the exception rather than the rule. And so what we'd like to do this morning is take a closer look at these words: peace and quiet...godliness and holiness...and not just those words, but what comes before them and what comes after them, so we can hopefully come to understand what it is that God is saying here, and so we can then go from here and put this into practice in our own lives.

Let me read the first 4 verses of chapter 2:

1 Timothy 2:1-4 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Shaun: So there's a couple of things that stand out here and are worth looking at...first, , let's look at Paul **Urging The Church To Pray** for all those in authority. Second, let's look at those words that describe **The Life We Desire**...a peaceful and quiet life...a life marked by godliness and holiness. And finally, let's look at why Paul would say that **This is Good**...why living a life that is peaceful and quiet, marked by godliness and holiness is pleasing to Jesus.

Bill: So let's start by looking at Paul...

1. URGING THE CHURCH TO PRAY

1 Timothy 2:1-4 I urge then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority,...

Urging the church to pray isn't unusual, throughout his letters Paul is continually calling the church to prayer, intercession and thanksgiving. What stands out here who he is calling the church to pray for...kings and all those in authority. That doesn't strike me as something that would have been easy for the church to do.

Shaun: I think most of you would know why Bill would say that. Because Paul is calling on the church to pray for the authorities of the Roman Empire. Some of you are familiar

with Nero, who likely was the Roman Emperor when Paul wrote these words. Nero was known for being self-indulgent, decadent and a persecutor of Christians. The Church praying for Nero would seem hard to comprehend, and yet it's what they were being called to do.

And Paul wasn't just urging the church to pray for Nero, for the Emperor, but also for the local magistrates as well...for *"all those in authority."*

Ray: So how did the early church respond to Paul's urging? Tertullian was a prolific author in the early church, and he wrote ***"We Christians...do intercede for all the emperors that their lives may be prolonged, their government secured to them, that their families may be preserved in safety, their senates faithful to them, their armies brave, their people honest, and that the whole empire may be at peace, for whatever other things are desired by the people or the Caesar."*** (Tertullian)

Bill: I read that and I say, "Wow." That almost sounds impossible to believe that the early church could pray like that and intercede on behalf of the Roman authorities who were persecuting them. And yet early in the second century, Polycarp, another well-known leader within the church wrote these words: ***"Pray for all the saints, (no problem with that, right? But then he goes on to say:) pray, too, for all kings and powers and rulers, and for your persecutors, and those who hate you, and for your cruel enemies."*** (Polycarp)

Shaun: You see what Paul and Tertullian and Polycarp are calling the church to do is put into practice the teaching of Jesus, who said...

Matthew 5:43-45a **"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven."**

Ray: We have often acknowledged that following Jesus can be extremely difficult at times, because what He sometimes calls the church to do goes against our natural desire. Throughout history the church has at times, refused to obey what Jesus teaches. At times the church has obeyed, but grudgingly. And at times, the church has responded willingly,

not because it is easy, but because this is what Jesus teaches, and we have learned to trust Him in all things.

Bill: It was 40 years ago this month that I first walked into this church...and through the years have participated in more than a few prayer groups...and I've heard men and women in this church respond to what Jesus teaches as I have heard them pray for those in authority. And I've come to recognize the fact that they do so regardless of who is in authority. In other words, leaders come and leaders go...this party may hold office for a while, and then that party holds office for a while...and there are those in this church who keep on praying through it all...no matter who is in authority.

I want to be like them. I don't want to refuse to do what Jesus clearly tells me to do. And I don't want to do it grudgingly. Through the years, it's not always been easy to pray for those in authority...and so I'm asking Jesus to help me trust Him and willingly walk in obedience.

Shaun: And so now we're getting a better understanding of the context. Paul is urging those who follow Jesus to pray for those in authority, because it may help to bring about...

2. THE LIFE WE DESIRE

God's word says that as followers of Jesus, we should desire to live a peaceful and quiet life...a life marked by godliness and holiness.

(1 Timothy 2:2b ...that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.)

Bill said that when these words came before him last year, they caught his attention, they resonated with him, and shouldn't they resonate with all of us who follow Jesus? Let's take a closer look at what Paul is saying here and invite Jesus to teach us and help us make these words the desire of our hearts.

Ray: The first thing we should desire is...

A. A Peaceful and Quiet Life

What first comes to *your* mind when you hear these words? Let me give you just a moment to think about that...If a peaceful and quiet life is what we should desire, what does that look like to you?

Bill, what does it look like for you?

Bill: For me, when I think about a peaceful and quiet life, I see myself sitting outdoors, behind my house, just watching as the sun goes down. At that moment, there is no place to go, nothing to do. No activity and no noise other than the sounds of nature.

Ray: How about for you Shaun, what comes to your mind when talking about lives that are peaceful and quiet?

Shaun: I think about it in different ways...in terms of relationships, it's when there is harmony, everybody getting along within the family and among friends. In terms of schedules, it's where I'm not so busy that it causes me and others around me a lot of stress. I guess the best way to describe it would be to call it a simple lifestyle.

Ray: That's good, because when you look at the original language, what Paul was describing was an **undisturbed** life, a **tranquil** or calm life. In fact, the word "quiet" in this passage refers to "**keeping one's seat**" or being "**still.**" One commentary described it as one being composed and avoiding what is flamboyant.

And so, Bill, this image of sitting quietly on the back porch...Shaun, this picture that you have of a calm life, an uncluttered schedule, these go hand in hand with what Paul is saying here.

Shaun: It also goes hand in hand with the life that Jesus lived. Are you familiar with this invitation that Jesus extends to each of us, saying...

Matthew 11:28-29 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

I can easily see Jesus putting this into practice in His own life. You think that Jesus was never weary, you think that He never felt burdened by all of the demands and expectations that were placed upon Him? We know He set aside time to be undisturbed, to “keep His seat” and sit still before His Father in order to find rest for His soul.

Bill: And so as a follower of Jesus, as you make your way into 2022, we hope that you will desire to experience this peaceful and quiet life that we read about here in this passage. We’d just like to encourage you to set aside time where you will find yourself undisturbed, where you can take your seat and “keep your seat” and be still with Jesus. You will find rest within your soul, and this is something I would think we’d all desire.

Okay, let’s move and look at another thing that Paul says we should desire, and that would be...

B. Godliness

Ray: Now here’s a good church word, isn’t it? I mean it just sounds right...but... do we know what it means?

Well for Paul, and certainly for Jesus, there is this importance placed upon the attitude within our hearts...and godliness is said to describe **an inward response to the things of God**. So again, what are “the things of God”, and how should we respond?

Bill: Well, if we’re talking about ‘the things of God’, it could be a pretty long list, but when I first heard this phrase my mind went right away to these words found in Micah...

Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God.

If God is saying these are required of us, then we know these things are important to Him. And so at or near the top of any list that would identify the things of God, would be acting justly...loving mercy...and walking in humility.

Shaun: And Godliness also carries with it this sense of deep reverence for God. And so because of our devotion to God, because of our commitment to Jesus...we look for opportunities to act justly, that is, to be impartial, to be fair.

And let's admit, this isn't easy...because we all look at the world and what is taking place in the world in different ways. And there are so many different factors involved in how we view what is taking place in the world...the things we've been taught as well as the things we have experienced. And because of this it's really challenging to look at things impartially.

But one of the things we can talk to Jesus about and reflect on when we are sitting quiet before Him, is how to act justly...how to love showing mercy to others, because we reflect on the mercy that Jesus has extended to us...how to walk in humility, because we are walking in the way of Jesus. This is godliness, and it's what we desire as followers of Jesus.

Ray: So we hope this is coming together for all of us. We pray for everyone – including those in authority, **that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and...**

C. Holiness

Another good church word...and some of you know that the word "holy" most often refers to being "set apart"...set apart for God's purposes. But that's not really what Paul is getting at here in this passage. In the original language what Paul is talking about here is, dignity.

"That we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and dignity."

Maybe you're able to see that throughout this verse Paul is talking about how we carry ourselves...with dignity...with reverence for the things of God...taking time to be still, composed and avoiding what is flamboyant.

Bill: I find that word – dignity – interesting...I don't think this word appears very often in the Bible, but it does imply that there is a certain expectation when it comes how we – as followers of Jesus – carry ourselves.

And it brought to mind a sermon Shaun brought a couple of years ago when we were doing that series on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. And we came to this section where Jesus was talking about our motivation for doing some really good and important things...like giving to the needy, praying, fasting...and as Jesus taught, it became clear that what motivates us and how we carry ourselves is really, really important.

Shaun, remember how Jesus said we're to carry ourselves when we are giving to those in need?

Shaun: Yeah, Jesus painted this interesting picture, saying something to the effect of, "When you give to those in need, don't blow trumpets like some people do in order to draw attention to what you're doing. Do it quietly, motivated by a desire to please God, not be noticed by others.

Bill: Right. And then Jesus talked about how we carry ourselves when it comes to prayer, and Ray, remember what He said about how to go about this?

Ray: Yes, Jesus said you're not to go out on the street corner where everybody can see you...instead, "Go quietly into a room, close the door and pray..." Like Shaun said, motivated by the desire to please God, and not to be noticed by others.

Bill: What both of you say is good, and right...because another way to describe what Paul is getting at in this passage – besides dignity – is the word "**Respect.**" We desire to live *a life of godliness and dignity and respect.*

Self-respect for one...it's hard to have self-respect when we know deep down that the good things we're doing is simply so that people will notice us and approve of us. At the same time, we do want to live in such a way that will gain the respect of others.

So after talking about how we're to pray and how we're to go about giving to the needy, Jesus gave one more example centered around fasting...abstaining from food in order to more readily focus on the things of God. And Jesus said, when you abstain from food, "don't make it look like you're suffering, don't disfigure your face" in order to be sure that

others see and are aware of what you're doing...wash up and make your face shine so that what you are doing isn't obvious. Maintain your dignity and self-respect.

And so the point that Jesus is making revolves around our motivation for doing the things of God, and how we go about it. And not just the things of God, but in all areas of our lives, we want to live in such a way as to maintain our dignity and self-respect.

Shaun: So...before we get ready to move on to the final thing we want to look at, let's just remember that earlier we all agreed that there are times when it's good to let loose and have fun with friends and family. To be active and maybe get loud and even act a little flamboyant. There are times and places where that's appropriate.

At the same time, I think it's important that we be thoughtful when it comes to how we live and what people see when they look at us. Which leads to our third and final point...where Paul says that...

3. THIS IS GOOD

Ray: Paul said **pray for everyone** – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 I urge then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

And then he said...

This is good.

Now why would Paul say that? We could probably come up with all kinds of good answers, but I think we can see what Paul is getting at as we keep on reading.

This is good. and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

You see, it is God's desire that all would come to know, love and follow His Son, Jesus. And one way that He goes about this is working through those of us who already do.

Shaun: Think about it...this question that all of us face...**What to do about Jesus?**...is a very serious question. It's not to be taken lightly, it's not comedy material, we're not to be flippant or careless when it comes to this question.

It's a serious question that needs to be taken seriously, and so as followers of Jesus, we need to be sure that even in the midst of our fun, we are living in such a way that others will take us seriously when we say that we follow Jesus. And that they should as well.

And so if others look at us, get to know us and see that we know what it is to be quiet and still before God...when they come to see that we take the things of God seriously – justice, mercy, humility – and put this into practice in our own lives...then maybe God will use us as He works to draw every man, woman and child to a knowledge of the truth, and come to follow Jesus.

Bill: I've shared this before, it's been a while, but I'm going to share it again because a surprising number of you have brought it back up to me through the years, and I realize it's something that spoke to a good many of us.

Karen and I were visiting another church, it was out in Illinois probably about 15 years ago. And the pastor was sharing that there was a time when someone who did not believe in Jesus needed to have about 5 encounters with committed followers of Jesus before making a decision to follow Jesus themselves. They needed to come across men and women who lived it...that is, by the way they spoke, the way they lived, by the way they carried themselves...if they came across 5 committed followers of Jesus, it made a significant impact on their decision.

And then the pastor went on to say that today, that number is no longer 5, but today someone who does not follow Jesus needs to encounter about 30 committed followers of Jesus before coming to a decision of their own.

If God truly desires that all be saved, and He does, then we need to see the importance of the part that we play. We need to see why Paul says that living a peaceful and quiet life is good...why being committed to the things of God is good...why carrying ourselves with dignity is good.

These things are good because if you will live this way, God can and will use you to draw others to Himself. And it's so important to realize that whether you're encounter # 7, or 15, 23, or 30...the way you live matters. What others see when they look at you matters.

Ray: So what Bill is saying is, take Paul's words seriously, because it's a serious matter. Will you, as we begin a new year - a time when people tend to make commitments that they know are good - will you commit to taking steps that will allow you moments of peace and quiet in your life?

Identify the things that are keeping you from experiencing moments of peace and quiet. What can you let go of, what can you change? This is some of what we'll start looking at next week as Pastor Shaun begins a 4-week sermon series on **Habits**.

We'll be talking about taking steps that will help you find time to take a seat and keep your seat before Jesus here in 2022, I'll bet you will be amazed at how this will change you, and the ways that God will use you to draw others to Himself.

Shaun: And this year, be serious about living a life marked by Godliness, that is, responding inwardly to the things of God...act justly, and love doing it...recognize opportunities to show mercy to others, and love doing it...walk and speak with humility...whether face to face, on our phones, or when posting on social media?

Let's have fun, let's laugh and experience joy throughout the course of 2022...but as we do, let us carry ourselves with dignity, so that when others look at you, when others look at me, they will see more than just someone who goes to Five Forks Church, but they will also see someone who is a committed follower of Jesus.

This will be good, and pleasing to Jesus our Savior.

Bill: Before we go before the Lord in prayer, I think we need to be aware that there may be some in here – and out there – who have not yet made a commitment to follow Jesus.

If this is you, maybe you're close...you've seen others who you can tell are serious about their commitment to Jesus...you see how they live and the impact that Jesus is making in their lives...and it's been making an impact on you as well.

Any one of the three of us would be grateful if you would approach one of us after the closing song, and let us know where you're at...what you're thinking...and maybe we can help you take that next step of making your own commitment to following Jesus. Okay?

Let's pray together...