

Sermon

Body, Mind, Spirit and Heart

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Our New Testament passage today from I Timothy chapter 6 vs 6-19 is a warning of sorts by the writer to Timothy. We don't know if Timothy is being ordained or if this is at his baptism but most scholars believe that it is at his baptism. So let us all consider that our own baptism is equivalent to Timothy's as it is within this passage. The passage begins by instructing Timothy that he might fight the good fight and have faith and a good conscience to take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and for what you made the good confession. This passage reminds us that through baptism we are marked by God and we have a promise from God and to God that we will live our life in a godly way. As an extension of his personal charge, Timothy is to call each person in his community to consider his or her baptism the call to be a profit in their time. We spent this past summer looking at the various prophets in the Old Testament. Each one of those prophets had a different call from God but all were called to lead, instruct and direct God's people. Some were acknowledged and others struggled.

Have you ever considered you are indeed a prophet of God? Do you think it's only us pastors who get to speak about what we believe God is still saying? According to our scripture today what this means for us and meant for Timothy is we are called to a life of godliness combined with contentment. Contentment not because of our worldly success but because

we have somehow found a way to live our lives for and through God and have avoided the distractions of this physical life. We are told that in this process and in that way of living there is true contentment and happiness.

In our scripture Timothy is soundly warned to flee from the love of money that is a root of all kinds of evil according to our scripture. Not to flee from money it's self but simply steer clear of the love or allure of money. (pause)..... I'm pausing here because I really feel that is a statement that we can all understand and relate to. How many times in your life have you felt less than because you didn't have as much money as someone else or how many times in your life have you taken on more than you should or taken out more credit than you should, just so you could satisfy that burning desire, that drive, to look and feel like a monetary success.

The love of money we are warned leads to great distraction from our calling. Where do you see people who follow this power of money in our own world and how is it affecting our own personal lives every day? The scripture is also clear that it isn't people with money that are excluded from happiness or excluded from godliness --quite the contrary! In our scripture it says that those with means are called to something more. How can we have money and still have contentment ...can that possibly happen? Yes through generosity and a readiness to share according to our passage.

When we think about what it requires to truly live into the scripture I think about people who train for the martial arts. I read this story about a taekwondo master who had studied for 35 years almost 90% of his life to

reach the level of competency and discipline that he was demonstrating in order to become a black belt. The physical demand was extreme and it was far more than just physical; it was an entire way of life in order to get to this level of expertise and performance. The master spoke of seven qualities necessary for the achievement of black belt excellence. They are vision, belief in action, integrity, persistence, expansion, compassion, acceptance, and surrender. It is clear that his athleticism is not separate from the rest of his life. In order to achieve this level within this art, he had to live his entire life for it. He had to make a full commitment.

The qualities required to achieve this masters level of taekwondo is not so different than the list we are given in first Timothy. Each requires that the body, mind, spirit, and heart be fully engaged in working inter-dependently. It requires more than some sort of commitment to a list of rules. Our Psalmist today strengthens our message..."Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God...who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. Sets the prisoner free, opens the eyes of the blind, lifts up those who are bowed down.

What we are asked to do is to devote ourselves to this kind of God – to something that actually works. There is no lottery ticket – an easy way to attain it. Just like the Taekwondo master, it takes a lifetime of discipline. But the reward is not in the achievement – not in martial arts and not in our faith. The reward is that through our faith journey – as we work to follow

these principles no matter what is happening around us, to us, in us – we on some level have contentment because we know that our loving God who opens the eyes of the blind is our guide each and every day.

In order for us to truly live into faith, love, endurance, gentleness all of us, all our being must be focused. Reading the Bible, attending Bible studies, without an open heart or the introspection of spirit produces empty words and deeds. Without fire of spirit within us where does our compassion truly come from? Some sense of duty? and acting purely on our emotions without some sense of intellect can lead us to do rash things, say hurtful things to people that we love, to be judgmental. To make the good confession and live into the life we are called to through our baptism, to take hold of the eternal life, to fight the good fight of the faith, we must be fully engaged. Body, mind, spirit, and heart fully following the ways of God.

Amen