

Kingdom Legacy

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2 Timothy 1:1-7

Sermon Series:
Kingdom Legacy

Context is everything.

All in the Family was a popular TV sitcom in the 1970s. It was controversial when it first appeared, given the bigotry of its main character, Archie Bunker. Archie's comments were highly inflammatory against women, homosexuals, blacks and every other minority. If you took Archie's comments at face value, the show would seem to support such prejudices. But the intent of the show was actually to lampoon Archie, not support him. Context is everything.

Some people play roulette with the Bible. They are so desperate for guidance from God that they close their eyes, randomly let the Bible fall open and point to a verse, hoping for a word from the Lord. Bible roulette works pretty well if your finger falls on the beloved words of Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd...." But what do you do if your finger falls upon the admonition Jesus gives to the rich young ruler, "Go and sell everything you have" (Mark 10:21) or what Jesus says about sin in the Sermon on the Mount, "If your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out" (Matthew 5:29). Context is everything.

Exegesis is the process of drawing the intended meaning out of a Biblical text. Its polar opposite, *eisogesis*, is reading one's own

interpretation into the text. We can make the Bible say anything we want it to say if we don't read it in context. Context is everything!

Second Timothy will be the focus for the next eight Sundays worth of sermons. Context is everything in this letter. I'll need your undivided attention for the next few minutes as I set this letter's context. I'll do my best to send you on your way inspired and ready to face the week, but first I need you to wrap your mind around this letter. Setting the context will make this passage and your reading in our devotional Kingdom Matters come alive.

The salutation, verses 1-2, identify both the sender and receiver of this letter. I wonder why we moderns sign our letters and email at the end rather than at the beginning? Ancient letter writers had a more utilitarian method of correspondence. They put the recipient in first position and the sender in second place, much like an office memo. So our letter begins: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God...to Timothy, my dear son."

Some Bible scholars question whether Paul actually wrote this letter, given that some of its vocabulary is foreign to Paul. I contend the personal references in this letter suggest otherwise. But since I'm already encroaching upon the abyss of boredom for some of you, I'll

Who is your Paul in the faith?

take the issue of authorship off line for any who want to pursue it further.

The book of Acts tells us Timothy's father is Gentile and his mother is Jewish (16:1). Timothy's mother and grandmother likely become believers during Paul's first missionary journey. Timothy then is a third generation disciple within his family.

Paul writes this letter from prison in Rome, evidenced by his reference to chains in 1:16 and 2:9. While Paul pines in his other letters about future opportunities to visit churches, here he comes to terms with his own death. We read in chapter four that he has already had a preliminary hearing (4:16) and now awaits final trial. Paul thoroughly expects the verdict of death. He writes in verse 6 that "the time has come for my departure."

This letter serves as Paul's last will and testament. The baton is being passed to his younger son in the faith. The legacy Paul received from his spiritual ancestors (1:3), which Timothy received from his grandmother and mother (1:5), will now be passed along to future generations through Timothy. Paul is telling Timothy to cherish his spiritual heritage and to share it with those who come after him.

Timothy received this salvation gift through the laying on of Paul's hands (1:6). Hands in the Bible are used to bestow blessing, pray for healing and consecrate people for missionary service. Our modern practice of the laying on of hands

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originates from this ancient Biblical precedent.

Paul reminds Timothy in verse 6 to "rekindle the gift." Fan into flame this gift of salvation and calling. As embers in a fire need constant stirring, so "revive us again, O Lord" (Psalm 85:6).

Some of us are relying on an experience we had with God years ago. Our enthusiasm for God has waned. We cannot rely on yesterday's faith. We need today's Holy Spirit fire!

Timothy's assignment in this letter is particularly daunting. Paul summons Timothy to stop the negative influence of so-called false teachers in the Ephesus church. This explains the reference in verse 7 that God did not give Timothy a spirit of cowardice but a spirit of power, love and self-discipline. So what difference does 2nd Timothy make in my life? Here's what. Who is your Paul in the faith? Do you have anybody giving input to your life who is older and wiser in the ways of faith? Who is your Timothy in the faith? Is there someone in whom you are investing the legacy of Christian faith?

You may be a teacher, coach or instructor of some kind. You may be a parent raising children in the ways of faith. You may be an older person giving input to a younger person. You don't have to be old to leave a legacy. College students can leave a legacy for high school students. High school students can leave a legacy for middle school students.

***Will you leave
a kingdom
legacy...or
invest your
whole life
merely in
earthly
kingdoms?***

The words of the song *Legacy* come to mind:

“I want to leave a legacy.
How will they remember me?
Did I choose to love?
Did I point to you enough to
make a mark in things?
I want to leave an offering;
A child of mercy and grace
who blessed your name
unapologetically;
And leave that kind of legacy.”

Al Capone virtually owned the city of Chicago during the prohibition era. He was one of Chicago’s legendary mobsters, notorious for his involvement with organized crime. Al Capone’s first lieutenant in organized crime, who went by the nickname of Fast Eddie, was a lawyer whose legal maneuvering kept Big Al out of jail. Al Capone paid Eddie handsomely for his work. Eddie built a large, fenced-in mansion with all the live-in help his family could ever need.

Eddie tried to live a respectful life. He taught hard work, loyalty and respect to his family. But he saw too much. He knew too much. He watched Capone’s thugs brutalize innocent people. The contradictions got to him. Eddie had a son. He wanted more for his son than the dressed-up life of crime. He tried to do right by his son. But try as he might, he couldn’t leave his son the legacy of a good name and a good example.

One day, Eddie took what he knew to the authorities and told them the truth about Al “Scarface” Capone. Al Capone was arrested

on 23 counts of tax evasion. Eddie knew there would be a cost for his actions. Within the year, Eddie was gunned down in a hail of bullets on a deserted Chicago street. Yet, Eddie had given his son the legacy of doing the right thing.

We’re calling the next eight weeks worth of sermons “Kingdom Legacy.” The apostle Paul, grandmother Lois and mother Eunice leave Timothy a spiritual legacy. Will you leave a kingdom legacy for those who come after you, or will you invest your whole life merely in earthly kingdoms?

For five months now, we’ve been preaching on the kingdom of God. I’ve said repeatedly the kingdom of God is not only a place believers go after they die. Jesus said, “The kingdom of God has come near.” God’s kingdom may not be of this world, but it’s for this world.

Lieutenant Commander Butch O’Hare was a fighter pilot assigned to the aircraft carrier Lexington in the South Pacific. One day his entire squadron was sent on a mission. After he was airborne, he looked at his fuel gauge and realized someone had forgotten to top off his fuel tank. He would not have enough fuel to complete the mission and return to the ship. His flight commander ordered him back to the ship. Reluctantly, he dropped out of formation and headed back to the carrier. Then he saw something that took his breath away. A squadron of Japanese aircraft flying toward the American aircraft carrier. Instinctively, he dove into the formation of Japanese planes and fired his wing-mounted machine guns. He shot at as many

What kind of legacy will you leave for those who come after you?

planes as he could until his ammunition was spent. Then he dove at the planes, trying to clip a wing or tail in hopes of damaging as many enemy aircraft as possible.

Eventually, the exasperated Japanese squadron broke off and went in another direction. He returned to the carrier. The camera, mounted on his plane, told the whole story. It showed the extent of Butch's daring attempt to protect the fleet. Butch O'Hare had destroyed five enemy aircraft and saved the carrier. For his heroic action, Butch became the first Naval aviator to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. A year later, Butch was killed in aerial combat.

The O'Hare Airport in Chicago was named to honor the legacy of this great man. Next time you visit the O'Hare International Airport in the windy city, you can visit Butch's memorial displaying his Medal of Honor.

Here's the kicker: Butch O'Hare is Fast Eddie's son. Would Butch O'Hare have been a World War II hero without a father who chose integrity over ill-gotten wealth and power? I don't think so!

What kind of legacy will you leave for those who come after you? Who will follow in your wake? The kind of legacy we will leave is being determined now by the choices we make and the priorities we establish for our lives.

again, O Lord." Yesterday I came upon this sermon from the great 19th century preacher Charles Spurgeon:

"There will be some who will agree with me that the church needs reviving. But let me ask that instead of complaining about your minister, instead of finding fault in certain parts of the church, cry out, 'O Lord, revive us again.'

"'O!' says one person, 'If we had another minister.' 'O! If we had another kind of worship'....You do not need new ways or new people, you need new life in what you have. If you want to move a train, you don't need a new engine, or even ten engines—you need to light the fire and get the steam up in the engine you now have."

Rekindle the gift. "Revive us

