

"Directions"

Text: 1 Timothy 4:6-11

Grace, mercy and peace be multiplied to you as heirs of Everlasting Life – a Life that you even now enjoy as Children of God our Heavenly Father, and as joint heirs with Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians, wise individuals regard nearly every occurrence in life as an opportunity to learn. The alternative is usually just to get frustrated when things don't go the way we wanted or hoped. The current construction on East Divide is a good example. Lots of lessons to be learned there, like *"things always seem to get worse before they get better,"* and *"extra short-term effort is usually worth long-term benefit."* In fact there aren't many examples of frustrations in life that cannot be converted into learning experiences.

Our general topic this morning is "directions," which represents arguably one of the most common self-inflicted sources of frustration, mostly for men. I'm guessing that even men would acknowledge that good clear directions through or around the current construction would be most helpful. It remains a mystery why so many men routinely refuse to ask for directions, especially when the alternative is usually the wanton waste of aimless wandering. For the record, it is a baseless myth that the Children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years simply because Moses refused to ask for directions.

Directions are a good thing. They save time, make us safer, and prevent unnecessary stress and frustration. Applying this spiritually, each one of us travels day by day along our individual paths through this vale of tears en route to an indescribably joyful gathering of all the saints on the Last Day. We have been brought to life (converted) by the Holy Spirit, and that life that lives in us now will, by the grace of God, never be taken from us – ever. The problem is not destination; the problem is direction. All Christians are agreed on where we want to end up; an ever-increasing majority seems confused about the path laid out by our God on how we get there. Only a reckless fool would refuse directions.

That is where *doctrine* comes into play (disparagingly known as "the D-word" in some circles.) Doctrine, simply defined, is anything and everything the Bible teaches. Many Christians are often strong on faith and their ultimate goal, but weak on doctrine. Using the image of driving to a destination, Christians are strong on the vehicle and where they want to end up, but growing ever weaker when it comes to directions. So many

Christian's today seem to be of the opinion that any old route will get you there – it's faith in Jesus that is the key. Christians have obviously adopted this attitude from the unbelieving world, which believes that any old vehicle and any old route will get you to wherever it is you want to go.

But Christians aren't *lost*, like the Godless of the world. By definition, a *Christian* is someone who believes that what Jesus Christ did for us through his perfect life and innocent death on the cross paid the full penalty for all sins. A Christian is an heir of heaven through faith in his Savior Jesus. That being true, is doctrine really all that important? Aren't there, in fact, different interpretations of God's Word that make different doctrinal paths to heaven not only a reality but a necessity? Is there any real problem with that?

Our text for this morning addresses this critical question, and therefore we would all do well to read it now with great interest, thought and prayer. That text is found in Paul's First Letter to Timothy, the Fourth Chapter:

ESV 1 Timothy 4:6-11 *If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. ⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. ⁹ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. ¹¹ Command and teach these things.*

These are the words of our kind and merciful God – *kind*, because he has here reached out to us poor, hopeless, helpless sinners, and *merciful* because it is we who had rebelled against him and deserved only his hatred and punishment. Our goal should therefore be to make careful use of the gift of these words and to learn the lessons our God here offers. To that end we pray, **"Sanctify us through Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth."** Amen.

Not long ago a fine man from another city (who freely confessed that he was a Christian) lamented the fact that almost none of his children attend a conservative, Christ-centered church faithfully. In fact one son is already dead, a suicide. What is more, not one of his grandchildren

goes to church at all, and they seem to have quite a laundry list of serious problems in their lives. While we can certainly sympathize with the pain such a thing must bring to the man's heart, we would all do well to examine what brought about this sad situation. What could have been done differently? How can we learn from any mistakes he might have made?

While it is most certainly true that sinful human beings can, all on their own, abandon the good path on which their parents led them, many times the seeds of the problems were sown by the parents themselves. In this case the man tipped his own hand when he admitted, *"I don't pay much attention to doctrine. I leave that up to the Pastor. I just go to church and listen to the gospel."* Does that sound so bad? How many Christians today could use those same words to describe his or her own attitude or feelings about religion? Now ask yourself if you would like to trade places with this man and carry the dread he feels concerning the family he loves? How many would do anything in their power to avoid such catastrophe?

God gave us doctrine for a reason. Even many Christians today believe that each individual could and should dictate not only right from wrong, they also believe that they should be free to pick and choose which parts of God's Holy Word they need to follow. Returning to the comparison between *doctrine* and *directions*, while it is certainly true that faith in Jesus Christ alone saves, it is also true that the quickest and surest way to destroy saving faith (which is also a doctrine) is to abandon the other doctrines God has given us.

Listen again to what Paul told Timothy in our text: ***"If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed."*** Note the two things Paul emphasized here to the young pastor, Timothy. He spoke of being ***"trained in the words of faith,"*** (remember we are saved by grace through *faith* alone) but he also added, ***"and of the good doctrine which you have followed."*** (More literally, *"carefully or closely followed."*) Note two things about these words. Not any doctrine would do, and not just any old haphazard "following" would do. Timothy was to hold to and instruct the ***"good doctrine."*** It is *good* because God made it good by causing it to be recorded in his Word. *Bad doctrine* is the nonsense manufactured by men. Paul dismisses that sort of thing with these words: ***"Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths."*** Jesus also condemned and dismissed such nonsensical fluff in Matthew 15:8-9: ***"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."***

Just as not any old directions will do, so also not just any old doctrine will do. Nor is it true that any old interpretation is fine with God. There are directions that will get us lost; directions that will guide us where our Lord does not want us to go. It is for good reason that God in his Word continually stresses *fully* and *carefully* following the right doctrine. Why? Why is it important to God that we fully and carefully follow everything that he taught us in the Bible? It is important because he loves us with a pure and holy love that we can hardly even comprehend here in time. Sinners though we are, God's desire is that we spend eternity with him in heaven. God in his wisdom knows that the best and safest route to an eternity with him is the path he has outlined in his Word. That is what doctrine is all about. It is never supposed to be an end in itself. It is a loving means to a most blessed end.

What are we talking about here in practical terms? What do we mean by *doctrine*? We already defined doctrine as anything the Bible teaches, but how does that really affect us day by day here in time? Pick a doctrine at random – Holy Communion comes to mind. The Bible teaches that only those who can properly examine themselves should come to Communion. Why? Because we are running some sort of exclusive club here? Hardly. God has given us this *doctrine* because communing in an unworthy manner causes spiritual harm to those who do not understand what they are there receiving. A loving God does not give us doctrine to harm us. He gives us doctrine because he loves us and wants to protect us, because he wants to guide us. Another doctrine connected to Holy Communion is the use of wine and unleavened bread (rather than grape juice and crackers.) Why do we need to fuss about such things? Because God wants to give us spiritual strengthening from this sacrament. At some point this benefit would be lost if we tampered with God's holy sacrament. Why not walk as our loving God instructed us to walk? Why would any Christian want to follow a different path?

Take a moment and pick a doctrine – any teaching found in the Bible. You will find that it was given out of love and compassion, never anything else. Why do we baptize infants? Because infants are sinners and need forgiveness, and the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit works saving faith through the Word and water of Baptism. Why keep this great gift from the youngest of sinners? The Doctrine of Fellowship? God knows that error leads us away from faith in Jesus Christ. All error erodes saving faith, and the only way to deal with error is to separate from it. Man sees this as cold and exclusive. God sees it as loving and

tragically necessary. The Doctrine of the Last Things? Why does it matter what we believe about how the world will end and whether or not there will be a rapture and a one thousand-year rule of Christ here on earth? God loves us too much to allow us to imagine that there will be an obvious time to repent after the so-called rapture and before our time of grace has ended. He knows how tempted mankind will be to reject the Holy Spirit until that time, and that the only solution is to be ready at all times. Pick any teaching that God revealed to us in his Word. Every single one represents loving direction for our lives.

God our Father not only demonstrates his love in the gospel message of Jesus Christ, he also demonstrates his love for us in every Biblical doctrine. Again, what child of God would want to reject that love and choose another path?

God in our text tells us, ***"Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."*** There is an important fact here that we regularly over look. Following God's directions (his doctrine) throughout our earthly lives is not just about the life that will follow. While saving faith is certainly preserved by following God's directions, it also greatly enhances our time on earth, every single day. Humbly following his directions protects and preserves us from untold hardship and stress. It strengthens families and family ties. It removes the need for the hard lessons our Lord brings into our lives when we wander. It allows us to walk through life without guilt and apprehension.

In our text, Paul concluded with these words: ***"For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. Command and teach these things."*** The Christian faith is the positive, up-beat, glorious message that we all share the same Savior, Jesus Christ. He died for all sins, those who know what he did and those who do not. What he did is of no value to those who don't know him. That's why Paul said ***"especially of those who believe."*** Earlier in this same Letter to Timothy, God the Holy Spirit revealed to us that he ***"desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*** That's exactly why he gave us directions or doctrine and why he hates all that is false. His directions lead to a blessed life here and eternity in heaven. False directions, false doctrine, leads always and only away from Jesus Christ and the heaven he has won for us. It thereby robs souls of the fullness of life here, and any share in the life that our Savior has prepared for his children in heaven.

Thank your God for the vehicle of faith by which we are saved, and for every direction that he has provided to get you to that glorious destination that is now certainly yours - the loving path he has laid out for you to follow. God is good. Make sure your neighbor know just *how* good. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Romans 6:12-23** Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. ¹⁵ ¶ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. ²⁰ ¶ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

^{ESV} **Matthew 9:35-38, 10:5-8** And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." ⁵ ¶ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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The Third Sunday after Pentecost – June 21, 2020

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 756 (Brown Hymnal)

"Jesus, Lover of My Soul"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Epistle Lesson: (Romans 6:12-23) One of the most misused and misunderstood passages in the Bible is "judge not." Our society rips those words from their context and promotes the idea that Jesus thereby told us never to condemn any action as sinful. Yet not only did Jesus once say, "Go, and sin no more," our first reading condemns sin as that which belongs to our old Adam, not the new man. We want nothing to do with the sins that used to enslave us, and which God himself condemns.

Psalm 118 (Supplement page 29) (Brown Hymnal)

The Gospel Lesson: (Matthew 9:35-38, 10:5-8) Though our society disparages God's Word as flawed and outdated, they will often quote it out of context to "prove" their misconceptions. One of those popular misconceptions is that the gospel is all about the promotion of what is today called "social justice." Jesus however told us that his kingdom is not of this world. Christians naturally practice love and compassion, but as a fruit of faith, and it is by faith alone that we are saved. The Christian faith is not "do this" but "Christ paid for all of your sins."

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – (Brown Hymnal page 15)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 798 (Brown Hymnal)

"God, We Praise You"

The Sermon – Text: 1 Timothy 4:6-11 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Directions"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 779 (Stanzas 1-3) (Brown Hymnal)

"Redeemed, Restored, Forgiveness"

The Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn - 779 (Stanza 4) (Brown Hymnal)

"Redeemed, Restored, Forgiveness"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (32) Average (40)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Professor John Ude has returned the call to St Luke's of Lemmon. A summary of the recent synodical meetings in Eau Claire is available on the entry table.

Aid Needed – Members of several of our foreign affiliate church bodies have been hard hit by both the COVID shutdown and by recent typhoons. We have been sending aid through KINSHIP. To help with this effort, please mark contributions "KINSHIP Disaster Aid."

Church Council Notes – The Church Council met on June 14. Offerings for May were \$3,600 above budgeted needs, and are now \$4,200 above budgeted needs YTD. The Council voted to resume offering Holy Communion on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month. For the time being, the wine will be offered in individual cups only, and members will be more widely spaced at the communion rail. With the installation and set-up of our final pieces of equipment, our screen project has now been completed. Work continues on offering our Sunday sermons as podcasts. The next Council meeting is scheduled for June 26.

Confirmation – Confirmation Class is scheduled at its normal time this week – Wednesday at 6 p.m.

Daily Rest Meditations and Lutheran Spokesman – Apparently there was a mix-up in the shipping of the current edition of **Daily Rest**. If you subscribed and did not receive the current edition (which began June 1) please let Pastor Roehl know. Subscriptions are now due for the **Lutheran Spokesman**. Please see the sign-up sheet on the mailbox table and indicate whether you want to cancel, renew, or take out a new subscription.