

Sermon for June 21, 2026 - The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

2 Timothy 4:1-8 EHV

Theme: Do the work of an evangelist.

- 1) Because our world needs confessors of Christ.
- 2) Because Christ has reserved a crown for all who keep the faith.

*I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup>Preach the word. Be ready whether it is convenient or not. Correct, rebuke, and encourage, with all patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup>For there will come a time when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, because they have itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in line with their own desires. <sup>4</sup>They will also turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths.*

*<sup>5</sup>As for you, keep a clear head in every situation. Bear hardship. Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry.*

*<sup>6</sup>You see, I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>From now on, there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness. The Lord, the righteous Judge, will give it to me on that day, and not only to me but also to everyone who loved his appearing.*

Christ's kingdom can be compared to an Olympic relay race. As one generation of saints finishes its leg of the race, the next stands ready to take the baton and carry Christ's precious Gospel into the world.

Such was the case for Paul and Timothy in today's sermon text. As the elder apostle sat in prison awaiting execution, he wrote young Timothy one last letter – encouraging him to carry on the work of proclaiming God's Gospel to the world.

And we would do well to pay attention to Paul's words. Why? Because we are running the same race that Paul and Timothy ran. The baton is in our hands.

Let us, therefore, heed Paul's encouragement to **do the work of an evangelist**: 1) Because our world desperately needs confessors of Christ. 2) Because Christ has reserved a crown for all who keep the faith.

Part One: Because our world desperately needs confessors of Christ.

After encouraging Timothy to continue growing in God's Word, which alone is able to grant us eternal salvation in Christ and equip us for every good work, Paul writes:

*I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup>Preach the word.*

Just as the passing of a baton is no small thing in a relay race, so Paul's charge to Timothy is of the highest importance – so much so that the apostle invokes God himself to witness it.

Because Christ is coming again to judge the living and the dead, Paul charges Timothy with preaching God's Word – reminding him of the responsibility God laid upon him when he was first ordained into ministry.<sup>i</sup> Paul's charge, therefore, is God's solemn charge. To sin against it is to sin against God.

This truth is something all public ministers of the Gospel must take to heart. Like Timothy, we pastors did not take up ministry on ourselves. The LORD himself called us through His Church. He solemnly charges us to fulfil our ministry faithfully. Why? Because He is coming again soon to judge the world. He takes no pleasure in the death of anyone. He wants all people to repent of their sins and live.<sup>ii</sup>

Therefore, the LORD charged Timothy, and all ministers of the Gospel, to *preach the word*.

The word translated in our text as “preach” literally means “to herald”. In ancient times, kings sent out heralds to proclaim their decrees – speaking only what the king told them to say. God wants our ministry to be the same: a proclamation of His decrees.

And what does He decree? First, that all people are sinners, justly deserving His everlasting condemnation.

Then He wants us to proclaim that He doesn't want anyone lost to hell. He mercifully loves us all so much that He sent His Son into the world. Through His perfect life, innocent death, and glorious resurrection, all our sins have been paid for in full. Everyone who turns to Jesus in repentance and faith will not perish but receive the gift of eternal life.<sup>iii</sup>

It is our solemn duty to herald God's whole word to the world – not adding to it, subtracting from it, or changing it. He charges that we:

*Be ready whether it is convenient or not.*

We aren't supposed to wait for the “perfect time” to speak God's Word – trying to gauge when and where people will be more receptive. No, whenever the opportunity arises, God wants us to speak his truth – even if we know that, by speaking it, we might invite the ire of those hearing us.

For a pastor, that might mean rebuking a member of the congregation when you know it's just going to invite greater conflict. For a Christian parent, it might mean having a tough conversation with your straying child who doesn't want to hear it. There is never a convenient time for such things, yet God charges us to speak His truth in love.

*Correct, rebuke, and encourage, with all patience and teaching.*

Because no one enjoys offending other people, we might be tempted to only tell people the happy and affirming things of God's word – hiding what people might consider offensive. We sin when we do that.

Why? Because God gave His word to correct – to show people what is true, good, and right, and what is false, evil, and wrong. He gave His word to rebuke all people for their sins – sharply calling them from sin and evil so that they can repent and live. He gave His word to encourage the broken-hearted – to proclaim His forgiveness to all who took His rebuke to heart and stand quivering before Him in repentance. God gave His Word so that people might know Jesus and be saved.

Therefore, God wants us always ready to apply His Law and Gospel to the people He puts in our lives – and to do so with the utmost patience and teaching.

Gospel ministry, therefore, is not just about speaking the truth. It's about speaking it in love<sup>iv</sup> – not with anger, frustration or a holier-than-thou attitude, but enduring insults without returning them and not giving up.<sup>v</sup> It's about being blunt with God's cutting law – not because we want to hurt people, but because we know that only after the law has done its work of exposing sin that the Gospel can remove it.

Why is it important that we be ready to do this? Paul explains:

*<sup>3</sup>For there will come a time when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, because they have itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in line with their own desires.*

*<sup>4</sup>They will also turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths.*

Our secular culture is all about affirming the beliefs of others - regardless of how far from the truth they might be. The philosophy of “doing what feels good to you” reigns. Still worse, our online news feeds, social media platforms, and AI algorithms are programmed to keep feeding us not what is true, but what we already agree with and won't upset us.

One big reason there are so many denominations of Christianity in the world is that people keep seeking teachers who tell them what they want to hear instead of what is true.

Is that how God wants us to conduct our ministry? No. Paul writes:

*<sup>5</sup>As for you, keep a clear head in every situation.* While others chase teachers who affirm their sinful desires and false beliefs, Paul encourages you to stay sober – watchful against all error. Ask God to help you overcome the pressure to soften His message. Boldly speak the truth people need to hear.

*Bear hardship.* Don't be afraid to suffer for speaking the truth in love. God promises to stand with you in all your trials, as Paul himself experienced,<sup>vi</sup> promising to work in them for your good.<sup>vii</sup>

*Do the work of an evangelist.* Keep the purpose of God's Word in the forefront of all you do: to lead people to Christ for the salvation of their souls.

*Fulfill your ministry.* Keep heralding God's decrees - His law and Gospel – not hiding anything but always speaking the whole truth of God's Word in patient love.

When I consider the solemn charge Paul laid on Timothy, I have to hang my head in shame. Why? Because as much as I would love to claim otherwise, I know there have been times in my ministry when I was silent when I should have spoken, when I crafted my words to soften a hard doctrine to make it more palatable, when I expressed frustration instead of patience, when I avoided speaking hard truth out of fear. Haven't you also done the same in your personal witness of Christ?

The baton of the Gospel has been passed on to me as a pastor, and to all of us as a congregation. Yet, I have fumbled it. I have sinned. I don't deserve this ministry, Lord, have mercy on me, sinner.

And mercy is exactly what God has shown us in Christ. God's Gospel message of repentance and forgiveness is not just meant for others; it's meant for us too.

Where I have failed in my ministry, Jesus succeeded – giving a perfect witness of the truth in perfect love. He did this not only to be my example but to be my Saviour. Through faith in Him, God credits Christ's perfect righteousness to me—including the faithful witness I failed to give. Jesus died on the cross in payment for all our sins. He rose again to show we've been fully reconciled to God.

This truth makes me want to work even harder in ministry. Because our world desperately needs the mercy God willingly expresses to us in Christ. His saving mercy moves me to speak more boldly about our sin and His grace. Why? So all may hear the saving truth of our saving God.

The baton of the Gospel has been placed in our hands. Relying on the Spirit who works in us both the will and the strength to run, we press on through the pain we experience in our race, as we keep our eyes fixed on the goal of Christ's kingdom.

Part Two: Because Christ has reserved a crown for all who keep the faith.

Paul's ministry, however, was ending. He writes:

*<sup>6</sup>You see, I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.*

In Old Testament worship, a drink offering was sometimes poured out at the end of a sacrifice.<sup>viii</sup> Paul sees his whole life and ministry as such a thank offering to the LORD<sup>ix</sup> - with its last drops being poured out.

*<sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.*

The word translated as “fight” is really the word for any athletic contest. Like an athlete giving his all, so did Paul as he contended against the devil, the world, and his sinful flesh. By the grace of God, he was finishing the race. By the grace of God, he kept the faith – he kept believing and preaching the truth of Christ.

*<sup>8</sup>From now on, there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness.*

Notice something about the crown Paul expected to receive: he doesn’t say he earned or won it, but that someone reserved it for him. Who? God did before the creation of the world. God chose to love and save Paul – not because of any great thing the apostle would do; but for His mercy’s sake, because of the great things His Son would do.

Yes, as Paul ran the last lengths of his race to pass the baton to Timothy, he ran hard – looking forward to the prize Jesus won for Him.

*The Lord, the righteous Judge, will give it to me on that day, and not only to me but also to everyone who loved his appearing.*

The victor’s crown of glory, peace, and everlasting life is not something anyone can earn. It is a gift God promises to give everyone who completes the race God marked out for them in Jesus.

Instead of loving the things of this world, we Christians mourn over its sin and brokenness. We look forward to the day Jesus returns to remove all sin, sorrow, and evil, and to reunite us with our Creator in the everlasting perfect paradise He will bring.

Yes, we love the thought of Jesus’ reappearing. It is what moves us to work hard, preach boldly, and patiently endure the sorrows that come our way for Christ’s sake. We want others to share in our anticipation of His return – not fearing His just wrath, but welcoming His forgiving mercy as they turn to Him in repentance and faith.

We have received the baton. Paul has finished his race, and Timothy has finished his. Now it is our turn. Let us, therefore, run our race with all diligence, relying on the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel as we do the work of an evangelist. Why? Because our world needs confessors of Christ. Because Christ has reserved a crown of salvation for all who have kept the faith. Amen.

---

<sup>i</sup> Cf. 2 Timothy 1:6

<sup>ii</sup> Cf. Ezekiel 18:32, 1 Timothy 2:4

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. John 3:16

<sup>iv</sup> Cf. Ephesians 4:15, 1 Peter 3:15-16

<sup>v</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:4ff

<sup>vi</sup> Cf 2 Timothy 4:14

<sup>vii</sup> Cf. Romans 8:28

<sup>viii</sup> Eg. Exodus 29:38–42; Numbers 15:1–12

<sup>ix</sup> Cf. Romans 12:1ff