

1 Timothy 1: 1 -11 and Luke 15 1- 7 Jan Radford, 03_05_26

(SLIDE 1) We are starting a new series today looking at Paul's letter to Timothy. I find it a complex and challenging text, however, it is rich in wisdom offering guidance on the health and vitality of churches both then... and... now and is a great resource of spiritual formation for us all.

It was written to support and encourage Timothy in practical ways, ensuring the Word of God and the growth of the church reflected the gospel truth.

Paul had led Timothy to faith in Jesus, and calls him "my true child in the faith". **(SLIDE 2)** Paul's impact on Timothy was so deep that they viewed each other, almost, as Father and Son.

Timothy was young, when they first met, and already had a strong commitment to God. He was brought up by a Jewish mother and grandmother and would have had a good knowledge of the scriptures, but, he **(SLIDE 3)** was **transformed** when Jesus came into his life.

That is what stands out to me, **for Timothy it was all about Jesus. (SLIDE 4)**

Timothy was invited to join Paul on his missionary journeys and it was fantastic for the Apostle Paul to have the friendship of Timothy and for Timothy to have such a mentor.

After Paul's release from house arrest in Rome, he returned to the church at Ephesus to discover that it had become a centre of wrong teaching and was infected by false teachers.

Paul had moved on to Macedonia, at the time of writing, but Timothy was to remain as a leader, pastor and teacher and he is to step up and deal with the challenging issues and restore order. He had a tough job to do!

In this first chapter, the emphasis concentrates on the importance of sound coaching and combating false teaching.

The passage opens with Paul establishing his credentials, and his authority, introducing himself as Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus, by the command of God.

At the instalment of Archbishop Sarah Mullally. **(SLIDE 5)** a similar thing occurred. Before entering, Canterbury Cathedral, she knocked on the great west door and when asked “who are you? and why do you knock on the door?” She replied: I’m Sarah, a servant of Christ Jesus. I come as one seeking the grace of God.

And so, here I am: Jan, a servant of Christ Jesus. I also come seeking the grace of God.

When I was going through the process for ordination, I was asked if I was anxious about standing up in front of people and speaking. I answered, “yes I am” it is such a responsibility to ensure **what you** are saying is **what God wants you to say and is the Gospel Truth!** She said...I wasn’t actually asking you that question, but you have answered a deeper one.... I have to say, **I still feel that accountability.**

And so... Let us pray: **(SLIDE 6)** May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, Lord, My Rock and My Redeemer. And so as we turn to 1 Timothy we ask that you open our hearts to the Power of the Gospel.

So verse 2 : Three blessings were made available to Timothy – **(SLIDE 7)**

Grace, Mercy and Peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul is directing Timothy's attention to this divine source of blessing and this foundation reminds him all he truly needs is found in Jesus.

And so at the very beginning of this letter, we are also reminded, to seek that **grace, mercy, and peace...** for ourselves and for each other.

We all need this, don't we? We are never going to outgrow these gifts. We continually rely on these from God in our churches today.

By the time we get to v3 and v4 we are told to check out what is being taught. 'Instruct certain people not to teach different doctrine and not to occupy themselves with myths'.

I can almost hear Paul saying: **Timothy, people are getting side-tracked.**

We need to check we are not getting side tracked too. We need to examine how false teaching is disseminated. Something I am anxious about, is the ‘prosperity gospel’ when the relationship between God and Man seem to turn into a financial quid pro quo. (**DISCUSS**) When unsure we are to keep our eyes on Jesus.

(SLIDE 8).

I wonder...Are mineAre yours?... Are **we... all about Jesus** and going in the right direction, **or not?**

The Christian faith should result in v5 (**SLIDE 9**) ‘**love that comes from a pure heart, good conscience and sincere faith**’. The message bible translation says ‘love uncontaminated by self-interest and counterfeit faith, a life open to God, it notes those who fail to keep to this soon wander off into cul-de-sacs

This sort of love is proactive, sacrificial and focused on **restoration rather than judgement**. It is free from pretence, hidden agendas and selfishness.

And so, I turn to our gospel reading, (**SLIDE 10**) describing a shepherd who demonstrates this, looking for one lost sheep and rejoicing when he finds it. The shepherd does not just wait for the lost sheep to return on its own.

The search illustrates Gods unwavering and proactive love for those who are lost or have strayed and demonstrates how every individual, every church, (yes even the one in Ephesus) is valued and sought after, no matter how far they have gone.

God's character does not change because of our actions, God seeks us out, even if we are unfaithful, He remains trustworthy. God sustains relationships with us, underserving people because of Jesus.

This is an interesting picture, it was once in The Louvre, but now in a private collection. **(SLIDE 11)** It's called **Checkmate.**

The story goes, there was a group on a special tour of the famous art collection. This painting, shows a young man playing chess against Satan for his Soul. Satan is confident, he has won, and the man is in despair. It represents the broader struggle between good and evil and the temptations faced by individuals and churches alike. The chessboard serving as the battleground.

I'm not a chess player but I know when the King is cornered, its check mate and the game is over!

In the tour was a Chess Master and as the tour moved on he stayed looking at the picture.

The guide came back and asked "is everything OK, we have moved on".

The chess master said: I am a world class chess player. I spend my life playing chess. While I've been standing here, I have a problem with this picture! I can see the devil laughing and the man in desperation, but I notice something on the chess board. You are going to either have to change the

painting or change its name. Why is that, asked, the museum guide.

The chess master replied... the King still has one more move.

The King has one more move...

(SLIDE 12) Thinking about the church in Ephesus we have the chaos of false doctrine **(Satan thinks Checkmate)** we have a list of those who have sinned. **(Satan thinks Checkmate)**

Some have swerved from a pure heart and good conscience there is spiritual warfare and Satan believes he has won **(Checkmate)**

But... the King has one more move...

In Jesus there is **always** another move, **(SLIDE 13)** He continually seeks out and welcomes lost sheep. No matter how hopeless the situation may seem, **It's not Checkmate;** The King still has one more move...

We may have a personal issues, illness ,debt, difficult family relationships, Our church still needs a CFW (sometimes feels impossible!)but we have a King who can open doors we haven't yet considered. We have a King who is a Good Shepherd.

Whenever we feel it's "Check Mate" because things are not going well, remember that **The King** still has a move left.

(SLIDE 14) Consider what happened at Easter, on Friday afternoon, it seemed like everything was lost. But come Sunday morning the **King of Glory** was still present. Jesus had one more move.

Let's go back to verse 1 where Paul reminds Timothy, Jesus himself is our **HOPE**, Satan may try in many ways to destroy our hope, but it's not over. **Why? The King has one more move.**

Prayer:

We thank you for your grace, mercy and peace.

We thank you for the truth of the gospel committed to us.

We pray for a pure heart and sincere faith. Amen.

(SLIDE 15) This letter to Timothy is to be continued next week,

(1 Timothy 1:12 -20)

(SLIDE 16) A question for the week ahead, we are called to a **'love that flows from a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith'** how are we doing?