

1 Timothy 2:1-7 – Wednesday Service – The Knowledge of the Truth – June 17, 2026

+In Nomine Iesu+

1 Timothy chapters two and three bring purpose to the Christian congregation. We need God's direction in the church. It is easy for us to drift away from the purposes that Christ left for us—even as it is easy to drift away from right doctrine. Chapter one dealt with the necessity of sound teaching and holy living in the church. Chapter two addresses the conduct of public worship. Chapter three is about officers of the congregation and their responsibilities. We often read the Bible very individualistically. But as Paul writes his Pastoral Epistles, he writes with the local Church in mind. He writes to Timothy as their pastor, but with concerns for the whole congregation. And here it is the Church in Ephesus.

In Acts 6, the Twelve announce that the apostolic ministry has two emphases. Of course, there are more than two purposes for the Church. But two are primary. They say, "We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And we get the same in our reading today in 1 Timothy 2. And these two directives are highly related.

Let's begin with prayer. Paul wants a congregation that prays. The collect of the day and the prayers of the church are central to the life of the Church. But Paul wants you involved too. When the Church prays, we add our amen. Paul gives four different words for prayer: supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings. And we can learn things from each term. Supplication suggests the kind of prayer in which we make requests of God. Prayer includes the praise for God—awareness of His glory. Intercession describes selfless prayer. It is for the good of others. Thanksgiving is gratitude from an awareness of God's goodness.

And of course, prayers are to be offered for everyone. But there is a purpose here related to the Gospel. And then Paul also gets specific—we are to pray for kings and all in authority. And this is a real concern of mine for American Christianity—and even for us at St. John. Christianity has often struggled in its relationship to the state. We hear about the separation of Church and state. But it is not a biblical distinction. Instead, Lutherans speak of two kingdoms—or two realms—in which God governs the world. The right and left-hand kingdoms.

God is at work in His Church in the right-hand kingdom with the Gospel. He is at work in the world in the left-hand kingdom through the Law. Pastors are His ministers in the Church. Kings, presidents, and governors are His ministers in the world. All things are subject to Him—even as He desires both realms to come under His rule.

Psalms 1 and 2 are an excellent expression of this. And this Psalm serves as part two of the introduction to the whole Psalter. Psalm 1 is the first part, if you didn't realize. In fact, you might say that Psalm 1 is about the right-hand kingdom. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." Psalm 2 is about the left-hand kingdom. "Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

Remember, in ancient Israel, these kingdoms came together. Now, we keep them distinct. But they are not separate. And here, Paul speaks of the Church's obligation to the state. We are to pray for our kings, our presidents, our governors. All prominent public officials should be included in the Church's public prayers. And maybe that is part of my question for you today. Do you pray for the president? I know we have a very polarized political landscape. We have lost our ability to talk about political issues without getting angry. We end relationships in the family—and in the church—simply because people don't agree with our politics. We state our case—and dare them to disagree.

This is a real problem. If you are using politics to combat and vilify the other party, you are doing it wrong. Maybe we are quick to disagree with everything the president says just because he says it—

even when he is right. We never put the best construction on things. Or, we agree with everything the president says, no matter how wrong-headed it is.

As Christians, we should disagree with certain tenets of both parties. The political task of Christians is to be the Church—not to be republican or democrat. We embody a holy way of life under the Lordship of Christ. And it is okay to have no political opinion on a whole host of issues. I don't know the best way for the government to address the reflecting pool in Washington D.C. Maybe it could have been handled better. Apparently, it is already green with algae again.

But I don't need to blame the current president for it—or the last president. And *my opinion* regarding a pool on the National Mall isn't important. Vocalizing my opinion isn't going to change anything. It's not something to argue about on Facebook—and then end a relationship over. That is exactly the kind of drama that the Church calls us to reject. I suspect that some of the political values we so passionately cling to weren't shaped by a steady study of Scripture—but by political parties and news outlets—who carefully spin their content for their purposes. And our divisions suggest to me that our allegiance to political entities is stronger in practice than our allegiance to Christ.

Let's shift our political conversations toward what the Bible actually says rather than what our favorite pundits say. And if we were as passionate about the doctrine and practice of the Church—and making such things known—we would be in a very different place. Remember that God wants you to think of yourself as an exile in this world. You are a member of the kingdom of God. The Church serves as a foretaste of God's kingdom—a colony of God's kingdom on earth. "Jesus is Lord" means that we don't give in to emperor worship. The Lordship of Christ—over the state—is a politically disruptive thing to say—even though it is also entirely good.

Remember what God says to the exiled people of Judah in Babylon. This is from Jeremiah 29, "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." And although we don't have time to delve into it today, the book of Daniel is just an extended commentary on Jeremiah's advice for living in exile. Daniel becomes the voice of God to the Babylonian Empire. It's quite amazing.

Peter gives us some direction as well. In 1 Peter 2, Paul says, "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor."

And until Christ comes again in glory, we are supposed to pray for the president and other authorities. We are to give them honor—as we are able—always obeying God when the government conflicts with God's Word. We are to seek the welfare of the community in which we live. We have that instruction from the Prophet Jeremiah. And we have that instruction from Apostles Paul and Peter. But the state is not meant to define us—to tell us who we are—or what we believe. God intends His people to be set apart. He tells us who we are. And we live in His kingdom, which has no end.

Remember that the Roman Emperor when this letter is written—and Peter's letter as far as that goes—is Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus. Nero was known for his extravagantly immoral lifestyle, his cruelty to a whole host of people, and his persecution of Jews and Christians. He was far worse than any president that we have ever had.

John identifies Nero as the Antichrist. Rome is even pictured as a governing authority empowered by Satan—an institution that would one day be destroyed by God. And, because Nero was so unfaithful to his calling, the church's relationship with the emperor is complicated. He was to be resisted—even as the office itself deserved honor.

But returning to Paul's instructions, we are to pray for people like Nero. Not that the ruler would get his way. Not that he would be successful in all things. The prayer is still about the life of the church—and the purposes of God—in the world. We should pray about the great issues of the day. We should pray for the vast nations all around. But the focus of our prayers for rulers subsists in two things.

First, we pray that in our times “we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” And the second is closely connected, we pray that “all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” This is the atmosphere we want our governments to permit—if not protect. Let's deal with both.

Remember that politics involves the proper ordering of social practices and relationships. Politics has to do with all sorts of behaviors in the πόλις—the Greek word for city—from which the word politics comes. It refers especially to the people—the inhabitants of a city—a community.

And so, Paul's desire for a quiet life does not mean that we look for a secluded island—somewhere out in the Aegean—away from all the drama. We don't have to enter a monastery—although that might do us some good for a while. This isn't even about personal tranquility—although personal peace is certainly a gift of the Gospel.

In addition, Paul does not believe that the church must be magnificently imposing or impressive to be effective in the world. Instead of adding to the noise—and intruding on public life in some obnoxious way—a way that merely reflects the world—the Church leads a quiet godly life. The Christian life is quiet and peaceable—dignified—since there is no hatred or bitterness. Instead of creating drama, we worship, we pray, and we live in keeping with all that Christ has revealed.

And the Gospel of Jesus Christ gives what it demands. He grants us peace and godliness—and the closely parallel ideas—holiness, dignity—attributes worthy of respect. Together—as we will see going forward in this Epistle—these terms suggest that Pastors and church leaders—really all Christians—must have the right kind of reputation in the world.

Not that we are universally loved or appreciated. The Church will face opposition. We are caught up in a spiritual battle. But our lives are marked by the fruit of the Spirit—as we talked about last summer—whether the world likes it or not.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. We are to have the respect in the world—that we are who we say we are—followers of Jesus Christ—even if that is not what they want for us or for themselves. This is central to our witness in the world. This is the reputation of the Gospel. We are to be different, unique, set apart, bearing the image of God in the world. This is our quiet witness—our love for Christ—and for His creatures. And it leads to concrete and specific Gospel proclamation.

And this leads us to our second point. And it is more closely aligned than we thought. We pray that all people would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. We pray for the great success of Gospel proclamation. We pray for those outside of the faith—for those indifferent to the faith—for those who are Christians in name only—to repent and believe the Gospel.

We want Christ—as He is revealed by the Apostles and Prophets—everything He did and taught—to be made known in the world. This means a necessary change. A conversion to Christ—regeneration—renewal—reconciliation. We want the people of the world to become Christians—followers of Christ—one person at a time. All under the guidance and authority of His Word preached and His sacraments administered in His holy Church.

God meets people where they are. But He is not content to leave them there. We cannot remain in secularism, indifference, sin, or any of the false religions the world offers. Even people like Hymenaeus and Alexander—as we talked about last week—must repent—turn away from false doctrine—and immorality—and return to the one true faith.

Now, there are some very particular truth claims that come along with the Gospel. The Virgin Birth of Christ is necessary. The crucifixion—as something that happened in real history—and Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. The visible return of Christ on the last day. The authority and inerrancy of Scripture. This passage, inviting prayer for governments, for the people of the world, and for a peaceful life—is packed with Paul’s insight into Christ. This rich theology might not seem to belong as Paul talks about praying for the world. But it is the central announcement that the Church has been given. The Gospel is theology.

“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.” 1 Timothy 2:5 is frequently cited in our Lutheran Confessions—as is the verse following our reading. But that’s a topic for next week.

For example, the Formula of Concord references this verse speaking about salvation. “Out of pure grace, for the sake of the only Mediator, Christ [1 Timothy 2:5] without any works and merit, people are righteous before God in the way stated above (i.e., they are received into grace). The Holy Spirit is also given to them. He renews and sanctifies them and works in them love for God and for their neighbor.” This closely mirrors Ephesians 4, “There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Christ is the one Mediator between God and humanity. His work is exclusive. He demands our allegiance. There is no other salvation. He ransoms humanity by His own blood. This is the one and only way for our salvation—in His Church—hearing the Word of Christ. He is necessary. And trust in Him is necessary for us to have a future. He is our one and only Prophet, Priest, and King.

Remember that this would have been controversial in ancient Ephesus. Both of these verses were sent by Paul for the good of this city. But people would have been greatly upset at this proclamation. Ephesus was highly pluralistic. And they were very dedicated to the goddess Artemis. Her temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The whole city was very distressed by Paul’s preaching and presence in the city in Acts 19.

And that is the way that Paul presents to us here. The world may not like it. We will pray for them anyway. And we will make Christ known—in our lives—in our public speech—all for the good of the world. Jesus came to save the world. He came to save sinners. And the Church exists for that reason.

Our relationship to the world is complicated. I hope that is obvious by everything we have talked about tonight. Our allegiance is not to political parties—or even a president. Our allegiance is to Christ and His Church—the kingdom of God on earth. God intends governing to rule that left-hand kingdom with God’s Law—rewarding good behavior and punishing sin. This is the way it should be. But even when it isn’t, we still honor what good government should be. The Church prays. And we obey insofar as we are able—unless we need to obey God rather than men.

And so, let’s remember who we are. We are followers of Christ. He is our King. He is our Lord. He rules over all things. And we find forgiveness in Jesus Christ—and in Him alone. And this must shape our political presence in the world. We are people of prayer. We pray for kings and all who are in high positions. We pray that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. And then we live a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. God is pleased by such things.

The Church is a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that we may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. We live in the world, but we are the Church. Church and world—Jesus Christ rules and reigns over both kingdoms. And we submit to His reign in both kingdoms. But only one will take us to eternal life. Let’s find our identity in that one. In the name of Jesus. Amen.