

1 Timothy 2:8-15 – Wednesday Service – Men and Women in the Church – June 24, 2026
+In Nomine Iesu+

Maybe you were a little shocked by our reading today from 1 Timothy. Now, this passage is included as a reading in our regular 3-year lectionary. We hear it in September of Year C. We are currently in year A, as you know. But I've never actually preached on this text.

It presents a few problems for us about the role of men and women in the Church. And we are very tempted to explain away such a passage. Or to undermine it with a million qualifications.

Lots of churches are rebelling against what Paul says here. Many have even called Paul bigoted or patriarchal because of this very passage. Certainly—they say—we are much more enlightened than this first-century Jew—who wasn't even following Jesus until after the resurrection.

Now, as you have probably guessed, we are going to approach this text for what it is—God's Word. We are going to submit to it. We are going to look for Paul's intention. We believe that Paul—as a called Apostle of Jesus Christ—knows what He is talking about. We believe the Holy Spirit communicates precisely what He intends. The text means what it says. And it should guide our lives and our practice in the Church.

The Bible stands against the gender confusion of our time. There are essential differences between men and women. God created us male or female—with different roles in the church and in the family—and even in society. Sure, creation establishes a true equality of value for men and women. Both were created in the image of God originally—to be God's representatives on earth. But that doesn't mean we are the same or interchangeable.

I want to deal with three issues tonight. And remember that this Epistle is all about the Church. The first might seem a little less important. But it actually sets the tone for the rest. Here, Paul expects men to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or quarreling. So, before we get into Paul's statements about women, it is best to speak to his statements about men.

Paul has already outlined the content of the public prayer of the Church that we talked about last week. And the posture of prayer is that the leaders of the Church are to lift holy hands. Now, before we embrace the Pentecostal practice of waving hands to the beat of the Sunday morning praise band, let's clarify a few things. I don't think Paul is saying that authentic worship means we are all waving our hands around.

Remember that there are several postures for prayer that the Bible mentions, which you won't find at the big box church. Think of Daniel, who “got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God.” Think of David, who says, “I am utterly bowed down and prostrate.” Think of Job, who says, “Therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

And to circle back around, David adds a little wrinkle to the lifting of the hands. He says, “Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!” So, if we are going to practice the lifting of hands, we need to add incense as well.

But to understand this better, we need to remember what the lifting of the hands means. This is the only place in the New Testament where this action is mentioned. But in the Old Testament, the lifting of hands is often a priestly function for blessing and prayer.

The priest would raise his hands up on behalf of God—and to God for the good of His people. And the early Church saw this as the action of the pastor—with a connection to the outstretched arms of Jesus Christ at the crucifixion—rather than something that happens in the crowd at a rock concert.

But let's not focus on this symbolic act to the exclusion of the rest of the sentence. This verse is about the conduct of the liturgy. And it also says something about the character of church leadership. The one who leads the Church in the Divine Service should also do so “without anger or quarreling.”

I like the way Paul says it in Philippians 2, “Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”

There is no place for anger or quarreling or complaining in the life of the Church. We are not to pick at one another—or badger one another. We are to be a blessing rather than a burden. We are to live at peace—as far as it is possible. It is as James says, “Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.”

Let's keep going. Our second point is also about the life of the Church. Paul says, “Women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.”

St. John Chrysostom—the golden-mouthed preacher of Constantinople—was widely regarded as the greatest preacher of his time—until he started preaching against the lifestyles of the rich and famous. Augustine did something like this, too. They both found themselves in trouble. The Empress Eudoxia exiled Chrysostom because of his preaching on this passage. Apparently, the Word of God clashed with her worldly values.

Here, Paul calls women to conduct themselves with modesty, self-control, and propriety. Elaborate hairstyles and expensive jewelry were expressions of vanity and sexual promiscuity in ancient Ephesus. Paul is confronting excess and immorality among the women of the Church.

And sure, styles and cultures change. We don't want to read this in a legalistic way. But Paul calls women—especially in the Divine Service—to dress and behave in a manner befitting all godliness and chastity. Outward adornment should be consistent with the inner purity of those who follow Christ.

And next, Paul says, “Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.” Now, we want to be clear about what Paul is saying and what he is not saying.

And if you want to get into this in much greater detail, there is a free statement from the CTCR of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod—the Commission on Theology and

Church Relations—regarding men and women in the Church, called *The Order of Creation*. They have several other statements as well on the synod website.

You can see in our text that Paul builds his argument from creation. The roles that God gave at creation shape what he says. The fall of Adam and Eve itself shows what can happen when the created order of man and woman is confused or reversed.

Adam was the one chosen as our representative in God's covenant with humanity. He was the one responsible for the spiritual welfare of God's people. And it is his failure that brings death to all humanity. Thanks be to God that God sent a second Adam—the Man Jesus Christ to be our Savior.

And it is on this basis that we affirm the clear teaching of God's Word from the beginning. The call to the pastoral office is limited to men—just as the office of the Twelve was limited to men. These men, though, must first qualify—as we will see next week—to be the spiritual leaders of the congregation. There are strict expectations placed on the pastor regarding his life, his family, his character, and his conduct.

Now, this calling is not because men are better than women. Rather, it is about God's design. He wants men to step up and lead their families spiritually—as God intended for Adam at the beginning. The Church, then, is an expression of the home. This is one reason *pastors* are sometimes called *father*.

This has made national news, as the Southern Baptist Convention has voted to reaffirm a male-only clergy. We are not alone in this regard. The Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church in America, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and the list goes on and on. For nineteen hundred years, there has been nearly universal agreement on the ordination of men alone—albeit men who are qualified, vetted, trained, and called by the Church.

Paul is not saying that a woman can't ask a question in Bible class—or that she can't teach children in Sunday School—or lead a woman's Bible study. And a woman is to learn. It is her responsibility before God to be a student of biblical doctrine—just like a man. We want the women of the church to be excellent theologians.

The Bible has always done amazing work in reaffirming the role of women in the Church and in the family. Just read the New Testament. We find women supporting the work of Christ and the missionary work of the Apostles. We find deaconesses in Scripture. Women were the first witnesses of the resurrection. Mary became the Theotokos—the God Bearer—the Mother of God. The Church is the bride of Christ.

Christians ought to take great encouragement from what biblical truth has done to protect and improve the status of women. And clearly, men are also under the authority of the Church. Even pastors are under the authority of the Church. We all submit to Christ.

The danger here is that we let cultural priorities override the clear teaching of Scripture. This is what has happened with a lot of mainline Churches on the theological left and with Pentecostals on the theological right. Just because the Scriptures proclaim that women are of equal value to men does not mean that we are the same or interchangeable.

Some Christians have taken this verse to mean that no woman should ever teach any man anything—which is sometimes hard to do anyway. But remember that this is about the Sunday Divine Service and the Office of the Ministry—as we will see next week.

This is about those occasions when the Church gathers for the preaching of God’s Word—and the administration of the Sacraments. It is the pastoral office—and the spiritual leadership of the Church—where men are expected to do their duty. They are to step up and lead in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

Let me make one last comment on the final sentence of our text. Paul concludes by saying, “Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.”

We can see here that Paul finishes with the virtuous life of women—just as he began with the virtuous life of men. There has been a lot of ink spilled about this verse. Let me offer a couple of comments.

First, this verse does not limit salvation to those women who have actually given birth. Many women never have children. Childbearing is an example of a most noble—and exclusively feminine vocation—although certainly not the only one.

Again, the culture is working very hard to obliterate the differences between men and women—but here is a clear distinction. And when women are doing those things that God has called them to do—they find themselves submitting to God. This serves as a kind of shorthand for coming under the guidance and direction of God’s holy Word.

But I think there is another—and a more important—truth to affirm here. The child-bearing that actually saves is the Christ Child coming into the world—through the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There is actually a definite article here. It is not just, “she will be saved through childbearing,” but, “she will be saved through the childbearing.” This goes back to the first hearing of the Gospel as the ultimate Seed of the woman—our Savior Jesus Christ—crushes Satan under our feet. Faith in this childbearing saves.

The *Apology*, in our *Lutheran Confessions*, addresses this very passage. Interestingly, they are addressing the requirement for priestly celibacy in the Roman Catholic Church. And the commentary is helpful for us today. It picks up both of the comments I have made about this verse. And I will let this serve as our conclusion.

“But what does St. Paul mean? Let the reader observe that faith is added, and that domestic duties without faith are not praised. ‘If they continue,’ he says, ‘in faith.’ For he speaks of the whole class of mothers. Therefore, he requires especially faith, through which a woman receives the forgiveness of sins and justification. Then he adds a particular work of the calling, just as in every person a good work of a particular calling should follow faith. This work pleases God because of faith. So the duties of the woman please God because of faith, and the believing woman is saved who devoutly serves her calling in such duties.” In the name of Jesus. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+