

"I know What You Did *This* Summer"

September 25, 2022
At King City United Church
York United Ministries
Rev. Andrew K. Lee

Prayer for Illumination

Holy God, through Christ Jesus you bring the light of the gospel into our lives as grace revealed. Help to guard to this treasure and share it others, too, so that the faith that has lived in our ancestors and now lives in us may come to life in every generation. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Scripture Readings: 2 Timothy 1:3-14

³ I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. ⁴ Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. ⁶ For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷ for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

⁸ Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, in the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, and this grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹ For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, ¹² and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard the deposit I have entrusted to him. ¹³ Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good deposit entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

This is the Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

< Children's Time >

Hello my friends who are young, and who are young at heart! I missed all of you, and am really happy to meet you again! I hope you had a good summer, full of joy and new things.

Today I brought a story of Timothy. He is a young and gifted Christian leader. His faith and gifts came from God and his family, and Apostle Paul was really fond of him. Apostle Paul and Timothy often shared the issues of church ministry. So they had a very close friendship. Then, one day, Apostle Paul found that Timothy was disappointed and sad. So Paul decided to send a letter to Timothy.

“Hey Timothy, don’t be discouraged. And don’t be ashamed. I know your sincerity. Although you are young, you are a man of faith: I know that because your grandmother and your mother are praying for you. Also, you learned a faithful life from your family. So stop worrying about the future, but trust God firmly. And have more self-discipline.” This letter encouraged Timothy a lot. So he was able to continue his ministry without pause.

Timothy was so lucky because he had a good teacher and a faithful family. His grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice always prayed for him and his ministry. They are such strong

supporters in faith, so he was able to regain spiritual power from them.

My friends, do you have spiritual supporters like Timothy? Yes? No? If you are not sure, you must ask your mom and dad and your grandparents today! I can definitely be your spiritual supporter, and, I believe, so can your mom and dad and your grandparents. May God be with you! May the gifts of God be with you!

<Reflection>

Good morning my family in faith of King City United. I am happy to be at the holy sanctuary to deliver the message from the Bible. The summer of 2022 officially ended last Thursday. How was your summer? Was it enjoyable and manageable? Besides a family trip to PEI and bike ridings in Ontario, I mostly worked for the Navy this summer. I also worked at the CNE. There, I was in the Royal Canadian Navy tent in the Military section, introducing the life of military and sharing my knowledge of the Navy warships, the bases and units across Canada, the status quo of the Ukraine-Russian War and the operations all around the world, including the Indo-Pacific ocean, the middle east, the arctic areas, etc.

Among the guests, I met a strange person while I was in the tent. He was around 70 years old. He had lots of questions, comments, and inquiries. He said, "Oh, you are Navy; I like that!; Where is your unit?" He asked, so I answered. "My unit is HMCS York, and it is very close..." "How can my grandson be an officer?" Before finishing my answer, he asked another unrelated question. I patiently responded, "Well, there are many ways to be an officer, but in the university, your grandson can apply, and you can get the info from..." "How long does it take to be the rank of LCdr? Is the basic military officer's qualification hard?" Again, while I answered his question, he continued other questions without pause: His face was like this: "Come on! Give me this; give me that!" He looked somewhat preoccupied; seemingly many things were coming up in his mind. We, I mean, actually he, touched a lot of things in a few minutes and ended up questioning my trade: "What is your job in the Navy?" "I am a chaplain." "Oh! ..." This "oh" has quite a loaded exclamation. "Oh.." He continued, "What denomination?" He knew some knowledge about religion and Christianity. "United Church of Canada," I replied. "Oh!!!" Of course, this "oh!!!" is quite different from the first "Oh..."; he opened his eyes wide and commented, "I'm an atheist!" I felt I stepped on a bad thing. Now he tried to raise a fierce debate, or at least, a fierce complaint. He started ranting about a God that he understood, blaming everything, explaining and justifying how he became an atheist. His point was that if there is a God of love

and justice, his grandson shouldn't have congenital disease. "Oh dear my old friend, I had that kind of question 30 years ago, and you are still there?" I wanted to attend his remarks, but I didn't do that because the tent was about the life of serving Canada with unlimited liability.

Throughout the last three years, throughout the period of the pandemic, it seems like the ratio of change from Christian to non-Christian and even to atheist has noticeably increased. I heard many stories and excuses of leaving their church congregation of my minister friends. Whatever the reasons are, those, who left their churches, felt that it would be okay not to go to church *because* in their last three years, it has been okay without attending the worship services.

I'd like to share Christian Wiman's story instead of arguing the reasons for dwindling churches. Wiman is a church musician who teaches at Yale University's Institute of Sacred Music. When he was thirty-nine, newly married, another terminal cancer was diagnosed, so he was facing sure death. He and his wife grieved deeply. "Then one morning," wrote Wiman, "we found ourselves going to church. Found ourselves. That's exactly what it felt like ... so that we were casting aside the Sunday paper and moving toward the door with barely a word between us; and as if, once inside the church, we were discovering exactly where and who we

were meant to be.” In the face of death, Wiman found the quiet calling that assured him of a Presence on the other side of a wall. The gift of God that has been given long time ago calls us into a relationship with God.¹

We are here because the gift of God has been bestowed. We are here because the endless and persistent God is calling us. We are sanctified not by our innocence and deeds but by God’s purity and sincerity. The thing is, the faith of God, the gift of God is coming into our lives at any moment, and we don’t know when. Even the gifts come to us unexpectedly. It’s not a birthday gift that we generally expect but a gift of surprise from God. We sometimes haven’t recognized the gift even though we’ve already received. And yet, we usually recall the gift; when? When do you recall it? When do you recall the divine gift that you’ve received? We usually recall the gift when we are in danger, when we are weak, when we are having a hard time, and when we are in agony, like Mr. Wiman. Take a look at Timothy in the Bible passage today. He has sincere faith; however, he must’ve been in a time of despair and discouragement, so the Apostle Paul encourages him by saying “rekindle the gift of God”; “God gives a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline”; “Do not be ashamed!”; “Hold the faith and love.”

¹ <https://theamericanscholar.org/gazing-into-the-abyss/>

In the encouragement, Paul accentuated his faith tradition from his maternal line: His grandmother Lois and mother Eunice. Apostle Paul knew his faith tradition from his family, and he believes that the sincere and faithful life of his family had been embedded in his life. That tradition of faith and their lives can be recalled when Timothy is in despair. We cannot deny that parental love and faith greatly affect the life of their children.

Now a serious challenge is coming; listen very carefully. It was such a blessing when Timothy was able to recall his faith tradition from his mother and grandmother. It was such a blessing when Mr. Wiman recalled the gifts of God at the time of suffering. That faith, that gift, that blessing pours the power of God on Timothy and Mr. Wiman. They have certainly received the gifts of God. When it comes to the divine gift, what was the issue that I raised? What did I say? The problem is, although the gift of God surely is in our life, we don't know when it is coming to us or when we can recall the divine gift that had already poured upon us. Now it is quite serious: For some people, they encounter divinity or recall the gift of divine blessing at the very end of their lives. At the very last moment of their life, they may recall the gift or receive the gift. That is so good for them. Then, if Mr. K has left faith tradition since he went to post-secondary education and recovered his faith at the last moments of his life, would *his* children recall the divine grace in their lives? Again, people can

recall the divine gift in their very last moments of life because of their faithfulness in childhood and youth. Then, would their children recall the faith when they are in despair and suffering? I can't be too positive. Of course, God will make a way, and it's beyond human ability, but we need to take it seriously. If there is no input of faithfulness from the ancestors, we can hardly imagine that the descendants have or recall faithfulness.

Children remember what their parents and grandparents did, what they said, and how they reacted, so I feel a great burden when I preach in front of my children because I know who I am; however, I humbly proclaim the truth and love of God to my family. This is all because Jesus is bigger than me. Children and descendants remember their ancestors' deeds and words, and at the same time, as they grow, they all understand their parents' goodness, love, faults and intentions. And when they are in danger, in sadness, in despair, and even in joy and happiness, they recall the faithful words and deeds of their ancestors.

Sisters, brothers, and my friends! The time given to us is surely limited. And the time comes unexpectedly. Let's count our times and continuously try to succeed our faith to our children and grandchildren, trusting that Jesus is bigger than me. Practice your faith every day as you eat meals every day. Recall divine gifts every day as you drink water every day. Embrace the faith

tradition every moment as you breathe every moment. That practice, that recall, and that embrace will save you and your household.² Let us pray silently, recalling the blessing that we've received.

² Acts 16:31. Paraphrased.