

2 Timothy 1:8-12

Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost (Proper 22-C)

Lessons for the Day: Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4; 2 Timothy 1:1-14; Luke 17:1-10**Unafraid; Unabashed; Unashamed**

October 5, 2025

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

It's that time of year again. This coming week the NHL begins a new season. If you look through the sports section of our papers, you can't miss the many writers who have an opinion on the Calgary Flames prospects in the new season. Regardless of what these writers think, the fans know how they feel. They are optimistic. They are hopeful. They know that it has been a long time since the Flames were even in a Stanley Cup final. That doesn't matter. Die-hard fans aren't ashamed of the their team. They aren't afraid of being ridiculed by other hockey fans. They are faithful fans, and proud of it.

What about us as Christians? Are we ashamed of who we are? You might say it's been a long time since we've scored a major victory. Oh, for the good old days, when God parted the Red Sea, or Jesus walked on water or changed water to wine. Imagine what people would think if an apostle like Peter or Paul walked into our cancer clinic and start healing all forms of cancer instantly. Then we could be proud of who we are. But that isn't what we see today. We see the church hated and persecuted around the world. Neo-atheists rail against us, as if we are something evil. The scandals that we have seen within the church-at-large have not helped in any way. Maybe we even feel a bit of the frustration that Habakkuk expressed in our Old Testament lesson today: *O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.* (Habakkuk 1:1-4 - ESV)

Paul speaks to Timothy today in a time when things aren't going so well. As Paul reminds Timothy, he is a prisoner, held in a Roman dungeon, for his preaching of Jesus Christ. He is suffering because, at least in the eyes of the world, he has backed the wrong team. But even in prison, Paul is unafraid, unabashed, and unashamed. As he says: *I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.* As those saved by faith in the dying and rising Saviour, and as those who know all that He gives us by His grace, we live unafraid, unabashed, unashamed in a world that may not hold the church and its people in high regard. We are not ashamed to be known as the people of Christ, as we boldly and confidently bear witness to Him and His saving love.

Twice in this text, Paul speaks of not being ashamed. This isn't the first time he has said this. Paul's letter to the Romans revolves around this theme: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* (Romans 1:16 - ESV) Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. Even when it brings ridicule; even when it brings hatred; even when it brings the persecution that may come, we are not to be ashamed. Paul's confidence—and our confidence—comes from the assurance of all that God has done for us. Paul says we should not be ashamed to *share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

But are we ashamed? Are we afraid to let other people know that we are Christians? I'm not talking about wearing a cross or crucifix around your neck or on your lapel. Lots of non-Christians wear those things, too. I'm not talking about simply putting a nativity scene on your lawn at Christmas time. Yes, you have your fish symbol on the back of your car. But what about when we are with our friends, our family, our coworkers or classmates. Are we ashamed to admit that we are the people of God through faith in Jesus Christ? Are we ashamed that our lives are different, because we have been set free from the condemning power of our sin? Are we ashamed to acknowledge that we are different from the world, because, as Peter says, we have been

born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3 - ESV)? I've heard people say things like: "I'm afraid! I don't want my friends to think I've lost my mind." "I don't want my co-workers to think I'm a religious fanatic!" There is a relatively new term that we see in the shorthand of the texting generation: FOMA—fear of missing out. We don't want to miss out on events with our friends, even if it means skipping church. We don't want people to treat us differently because we have different priorities. Maybe we are even afraid that some people will turn against us because of our faith. It would be different if we were riding a wave of success. If the Calgary Flames make it to the Stanley Cup, you will suddenly see many Flames fans come out of the wood work. If Christians were viewed positively as civic and political leaders, rather than as radicals out of touch with the times, then it would be easy to be bold and confident about our identity. If people seemed eager for the message we have to share, it would be so much easier to speak of Him who died and rose for us.

Even though his message was not always accepted by the world around him, and even though it brought about the imprisonment which he was now experiencing, St. Paul says: ***I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*** That is our confidence, too! We can be die-hard fans, never losing hope because we believe in a dying, but rising Saviour. There is an old hymn which says: *Ashamed of Jesus? Yes, I may When I've no guilt to wash away, No tear to wipe, no joy to crave, No fears to quell, no soul to save.* (TLH 346, st. 5) How can we ever be ashamed to be known as those who are so precious to the King of Kings, to the Lord of heaven and earth, that He would willing give His own Son to save us? How can we ever be ashamed of Jesus, who loved us so much that He gave His own life in our place upon the cross? How can we ever be ashamed of the almighty Deliverer, who rose again from the dead, triumphant over sin, death and the grave? Why would we be ashamed?! We know whom we have believed. Even though we have done nothing worthy of recognition or merit we know that in Christ God has taken away our condemnation and given us life as His people. He has prepared a glorious home for us where we will rejoice in His presence forevermore. In fact, we are told: ***Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*** (Hebrews 11:16 - ESV)

During the Korean War, a company of US soldiers got cut off from the rest of their regiment by an enemy advance. Headquarters repeatedly tried to communicate with this missing unit. They kept saying "Baker Company, do you read me? Baker Company, do you read me?" Finally after 2 hours, a voice replied "This is Baker Company." Headquarters asked "What is your situation?"

They said "The enemy is to the east of us, the enemy is to the west of us, the enemy is to the north of us, the enemy is to the south of us. And we're not going to let them escape this time!"

We might say that these men were like the servants in the Gospel lesson today: they were just doing their duty. But they weren't ashamed of their service. They weren't afraid to do what they had been sent to do. They were confident about their mission even though they were surrounded by the enemy. Yes, we are surrounded by many enemies. There are those who hate everything that we, as God's people, believe. There are those who hate the Jesus who is our very heart, our life and salvation. There are those who continue to declare that the world would be better off without Christians and Christianity. They are wrong, no matter how passionately they may say it. The world does need Christ. People need His forgiveness, love and grace. The real enemy is the devil, and, as strange as it may seem at times, he has already been defeated. He cannot escape.

That is why we can be unafraid, unabashed, unashamed before the world. Don't be ashamed to be the one who sets a different schedule for the fun with your friends because you want to be in God's house. Don't be ashamed to be known as someone who gives generously to your congregation because you truly know and believe that everything you have is a gift of God. Don't be ashamed to pray before your meals, even in the presence of unbelievers, because you know that it is God who has given you your daily bread. Most of all, don't be ashamed to tell others who He has done for you. Paul assures Timothy that ***God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*** (2 Timothy 1:7 - ESV) In the strength of the Holy Spirit, we stand boldly and confidently before the world as those who know Jesus Christ is Lord.

The world is dying without Christ and we do nothing to help if we are ashamed of Him. How sad it is that even some churches don't want to speak of the crucified Christ, as if the cross is an embarrassment. So what if we are different, or stick out like sore thumbs in the midst of a perverse and evil world! So what if the world thinks we are backing the wrong team! We can, and should, know that we are sinners, saved by grace. And we are unashamed of Him who is our very life and salvation. That is why we can say with the hymn writer: *Till then--nor is the boasting vain--Till then I boast a Savior slain. And oh, may this my portion be, That Christ is not ashamed of me!* (TLH 346, st. 6) Amen.