

First Timothy: The Household of God

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THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD 1 Timothy 1:1-2

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me, actually, to Exodus 19. We're going to start looking at 1 Timothy today, but before we get there, I want to walk through a few things that help us understand some of the transitions that we are adjusting to in our worship gathering. You might...obviously, you've got the notes out from the inside of that...but as we walk through some of this, you might even kind of look back over the order, so to speak, of worship that's on that first, front and back page, because I want to give a little explanation behind why we're making some of these adjustments in our worship gathering. It goes all the way back to the people of God at Mount Sinai after they had been delivered from slavery in Egypt.

You remember...and we walked through the whole story of Scripture last year, and we saw many of these things...but, if you'll remember, when God's people were slaves in Egypt, and (God) led them out, He goes to Moses, and He says, "Moses, I want you to go to Pharaoh and tell Pharaoh, 'Let my people go.'" See if you can fill in the blank. "Let my people go so that they may," what? "So that they might worship me." That was the news that Moses was to give to Pharaoh. "Let my people go so that they might worship me."

God was delivering them for the purpose of worship. So, God sent plague after plague after plague, and eventually, the Passover. He led His people out through the Red Sea on dry ground and led them...the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night...to Mount Sinai where He assembled them together in this place. This was the purpose: He was leading them to this place for worship.

So, I want you pick up with me in Exodus 19:16, and I want you to read. We've read this before, but I want you to see it again. Just imagine this scene. It says,

"On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up."

What a scene! The people of God assembled together in this place to meet with God. God revealing Himself in thunder and smoke as a consuming fire, and then revealing His Word. Right after this, Exodus 20, is when He gives the Ten Commandments, and then following that, the rest of His Law. This kind of scene, from this point on, will become a pattern in the Old Testament. Not always as Mount Sinai, and not always exactly like this, but all

throughout the Old Testament, God assembling His people together to meet with Him and to hear His Word.

We could go all throughout Scripture. Remember Nehemiah 8 when the people gathered together? It says Nehemiah 8:1, "*As one man in the square before the Water Gate...*" and they opened up the book. As soon as they opened up the book, the book, the book of the Law, everybody stood up...began to lift their hands in praise, began to shout, "Amen, Amen!" They fell down with their faces to the ground and for hours; for hours, they stood and kneeled and just listened to the Word of God. They met with God. This powerful scene that led into Nehemiah 9 and 10, this powerful time of praise and confession leading to joyous, triumphant celebration in Nehemiah 12. That's just another instance, and it's all throughout Scripture. In a very real sense, what it meant to be a part of the people of God, is it meant to be numbered in that assembly of people that would meet with God for worship and to hear His Word.

So, that was the pattern of God's people...to assemble together like that all throughout the Old Testament. For that reason, I don't think it's a coincidence that when you get to the New Testament, and you see the word for church..."*ekklesia*" in the New Testament...that word literally means "assembly" or "gathering." The church is the assembly, the gathering of God's people together, and you see an importance placed, even in the New Testament, on coming together as a gathering in the church for the Lord's Supper, to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to one another.

In fact, fast forward with me over to Hebrews. So, one other place I want you to turn before we get to 1 Timothy. Go to Hebrews, which is near the end of the New Testament. Hebrews 12. In just a second, we'll start in verse 18. So the church, that word literally, "*ekklesia*," is an assembly or gathering of God's people, which is why the author of Hebrews is writing to some Christians who were failing to gather together. They were beginning to grow, in many ways, weak in their faith because of some of the pressures around them, and they were neglecting meeting with one another. That's why you go to Hebrews 10:24-25, you see the author of Hebrews saying, "Don't stop meeting together. You need to assemble together as the church." This is not optional for a Christian. A Christian doesn't have the option of kind of going "Lone Ranger." The Christian, what it means to be a Christian, is that part of the assembly of God's people before Him.

I want you to look at what the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 12 that draws a parallel with what we just read in Exodus 19. Listen to this: Hebrews 12:18. The author of Hebrews says, "*For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.*" He's describing Exodus 19. "*For they could not endure the order that was given, 'If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.'* Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, '*I tremble with fear.*'"

Now, listen to the contrast. The author of Hebrews says,

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel."

Wow! I want you to see what the author of Hebrews is saying. He's saying, "Church, when you gather together, when you assemble, in a very real sense, you are joining with a heavenly assembly filled with throngs of angels and heavenly hosts, and the church of all time, saints throughout the ages, together to give God glory and to hear God speak." What it means to be the church is to have this privilege of assembly as a people before God, together, to worship Him and to hear His Word. I am convinced that we have a dangerous temptation in this room to forget how huge this is. We have a dangerous tendency to let what we are doing in this room become routine and to lose sight of the fact that week after week after week, as we gather together, we are doing something that is so awesome, so distinct, so different than anything else we do all week long, that this is time where we have the privilege as the people of God to assemble together to meet with God.

You say, "Well, God is present with me all week long." Absolutely He is, but all throughout history, there is something unique about when the people of God assemble together to meet with Him and worship and to listen to His Word, to join together. What we're doing is joining together with angels who, at this moment, are resounding to the praise of our God. Saints throughout the ages who have gone before us who are resounding to praise, and what we do when we gather on a Sunday morning is not just tradition or routine, it's gathering together in a real sense with them to say, "We give glory to this God, and we want to hear His Word through us. We tremble before this God."

Edmond Clowney writes,

"Reverent corporate worship then is not optional for the church of God. It is not a form of group behavior to be accepted just because of its long tradition or its acceptability in many cultures (i.e. this is not something we do just because we're supposed to on Sunday morning). Rather, this reverent, corporate worship brings to expression the very being of the church. It manifests on earth the reality of the heavenly assembly."

Our Worship... An earthly expression of a heavenly assembly.

That's what I want us to realize as we make some adjustments in our worship gathering. That our worship is...follow this in your notes...is an earthly expression of a heavenly assembly. What we are doing is, in a very real sense, an earthly expression of a heavenly assembly. So, I want us to be intentional about everything we say and everything we do and everything about how we approach this time, that this would be an awe-filled, holy, reverent assembly of God's people.

Look at Hebrews 12:28-29. The author of Hebrews says, "*Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, [we sang about that just a second ago; this kingdom is forever]—let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.*" We are meeting this morning with the God who is a consuming fire.

Essential components of our worship...

I want us to feel the gravity of this...the weight and the wonder of this. So, what does that mean we do? Well, it means, you've got essential components for our worship. I just want to walk through what we've already done and what we'll do in just a minute; that we want

to be essential components in our worship in the days to come. First, adoration: we gather to adore. I just want to walk through these different facets. You might follow along, kind of see how that looks in your worship guide this week. This might play out in different ways week by week, but these things are essential, what we will do.

Starting with adoration. We gather together to express love to God, to express desire for God, to express delight in God. He is our audience. You are not the audience. He is the audience. We want Him to be loved and adored during our time together, to be praised and honored. So, whether it's a Scriptural call to worship, or prayer of praise that we say aloud, or prayer of praise that someone leads, or a song like *Holy, Holy, Holy*, it is us fixing our eyes from the very beginning. We are here to adore God; to love God; delight in God; express desire for God.

Then, leading to confession. We gather to adore, and we gather to confess. This is something that sadly has been inconsistent in our worship gathering. I take responsibility for this. Inconsistent in our worship gatherings and almost non-existent in many worship gatherings in the church today. Corporate confession is a huge, essential part of biblical worship. Now, this doesn't mean we set up mic stands every week and everybody just comes to the mic and shares with everybody all your sins, but it does mean that we as a people, week by week in our worship, as we glimpse the holiness of God like Isaiah 6, that we see our need for His grace and mercy, and we confess our sin before Him. Worship always involves honesty with God about sin, and honesty with each other about sin in our lives. As Corey, one of our elders, prayed, "Our pride, our rebellion, our tendency to reject His discipline and instruction." So, what he was praying was a prayer of confession for all of us. That wasn't Corey saying, "Here's all my problems." That was Corey saying, "We, together, confess our sin to God in prayer."

Which leads to, just as he was praying, leads us to celebration of His grace and His mercy toward us. For us to pray a prayer of confession, and then to be reminded that God pardons us in Christ...to not leave ourselves there in sin. God has not left us alone in our sin. He hides us in His righteousness, which is why he read from 2 Chronicles 7:14 after he prayed to remind us, "Yes, we confess our sins; He forgives us." A forgiveness in Christ, which then leads us to confess our salvation in baptism, which, obviously, we did not have today. We have pretty much every week people are being baptized, but not necessarily in each worship gathering. So, we didn't have someone baptized today in this worship gathering, but that's when that would happen. We confess every time we gather together how we are hiding in Christ, that we've died to sin and risen in Christ which is what baptism is.

All that then sets the stage for instruction. You look at Exodus 19: the giving of the Law. Nehemiah 8: listening to the Word. All throughout Scripture, a central, non-negotiable component of the worship of God is hearing the Word of God. So, Codie led us in Isaiah 40:8, a verse that we're, just together, we're going to try over the coming weeks just to...before we open the Word...to remind ourselves that this is a Word that stands forever, which means it deserves much importance in our gathering together. So, we'll confess that kind of that you'll see week after week after week. "*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.*" We gather together...one of the main purposes we gather together is to hear Him speak to us. Not thoughts from man, i.e. David Platt or anybody else, but truths from God. Anybody who speaks has a responsibility of making sure that what is said is truth from God, not thoughts from man.

Instruction that then leads us to communion, which over the coming weeks, we're going to participate in each week. You look at the early church. We've talked about this on a couple different occasions. It certainly seems like, if anything, the regular pattern of the church

was to come together for the breaking of bread in the Lord's Supper. This was, in many ways, central to their worship. So, we've talked about, "Should we do this weekly?" We've had that conversation numerous times before. Some people say, "Well, it would just become too commonplace." That's understandable in one sense, but at the same time, prayer doesn't become too commonplace and singing doesn't become too commonplace and preaching the Word doesn't become too commonplace. So, something that is central in worship, our continual corporate identification with the body of Christ, both in communion and reminding ourselves what this means for us to be the body of Christ is important.

I just listed again the reasons why the Lord's Supper is so important. What we do in the Lord's Supper: remember the body and blood of Jesus. We remind ourselves week in and week out that we only have life in His death; that it's in His giving His body and shedding His blood that we have a reason to worship and rejoice; that we even have access to God. We reflect on our sin and on His promises (we feast on His forgiveness of us and His faithfulness to us!), especially after hearing the Word. So, we'll listen to the Word, and then the Word exposes areas of our lives that don't align with the Word. We realize we fall short. We need His forgiveness, and we also realize there's no way we can obey this Word on our own. We need His life in us to obey His Word. That's all that is represented in the Lord's Supper. We renew our commitment to Christ and to each other. We say, "Yes, you're my Lord and my Master. I have been crucified with you and I no longer live. You live in me. The life I live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." That's what we remind ourselves of in the Lord's Supper, and then we rejoice because He has set us free from our sins, and He is coming back.

So, that's worth trying out every week. That, then, leads to intercession. Intercession where we pray for one another. We pray for one another. Oftentimes, this will be an elder or leader in our midst who will pray for us as we prepare to go with the Word unto the world. Sometimes, we'll do that together, but we need to have intentional time in intercession as we prepare to go out in the world that we pray to God on behalf of each other, on behalf of our city, behalf of the nations.

All that leading to commission. We gather for worship, then we scatter for witness. Every week...and you can see at the end of your worship guide...we're going to close by saying the Great Commission together. We're going to remind ourselves week after week after week that the way we're going to reach Birmingham and the nations with the gospel, is not by bringing Birmingham and the nations into this room, but by an army of four or five thousand people every week leaving this room to go, awed by the glory of God, giving our lives for the gospel of God in Birmingham and the nations. We gather, and then we scatter.

Central characteristics of our worship...

So, that's a little background behind some of these transitions. Now, amidst all of that, I want to point out four central characteristics of our worship that have kind of informed the way we've done this. As we've prayed through, "How can we best adore and confess and hear your Word and commune with you in worship, gather to meet with you," I want to put these four characteristics before you because they're all four extremely important.

One, divine revelation, i.e. the Word of God. We've talked about this many times before, but the Word drives our worship. I put there in your notes that worship involves a rhythm of revelation and response. You think about it. God reveals Himself; we respond. We see His greatness. We sing of His greatness. We see His holiness, so we respond in praying the confession. We hear His Word, and we know what to respond to. We've said in prayer, "You speak. We obey." So, that's revelation and response. So, all throughout this structure, so to

speaking, order of worship, you see the Word just saturating it because we want God, by His Spirit, to direct our worship, and this is key.

Side note here because some people might look at this structure and say, "Well, where is there room for the Holy Spirit in all of this?" That's a good question, because it exposes an idea behind the question, an idea that the Holy Spirit only leads in spontaneous ways that would go against structure. The reality is, though, the Holy Spirit doesn't just lead in an actual moment when we gather together for worship, but the Holy Spirit actually leads in moments leading up to that moment when we gather together for worship.

Take preaching, for example. Sometimes, I hear preachers say, "Well, I don't need to prepare a sermon. I'm just going to stand up and say whatever the Holy Spirit leads me to say at that moment." I can appreciate, in one sense, what a preacher says that he's going for...wanting to be led by the Spirit. Certainly, there will be times when I or you or anyone else, any other follower of Christ might be put in a position, a situation, where you are not prepared to speak. Jesus tells His disciples when they get into trouble and brought before authorities, by His Spirit, He will enable them to speak well, but the reality is, if He has given us opportunity to consider what to say on behalf of Him, I think we ought to take it. For a preacher to say, "I'm just going to wait. I'm not going to prepare. I'm just going to wait and say whatever the Spirit leads at that moment," sounds flat lazy to me. The reality is, if I am going to be before you this morning and claim to speak on behalf of God, to say, "This is what God has said," I ought to do my best to know what God has said.

I got a letter this week from a guy I don't know, but at the top of the page it says, "A message from the Lord God Almighty." Then, he signed it at the bottom. That is dangerous. To say you have a word from God...some fresh, new revelation from God. Brothers and sisters, I am not the chef here, remember. It's not my job to come up with a new word. I'm the waiter. I don't cook the food. My job is to bring it to the table and to bring it hot. That's my job.

So, in preaching, and then, why not in the rest of worship do we not want to think through...we want...just as I want the Word to drive preaching, isn't it good for the Word to drive praying as well? Especially, when Jesus said in John 15, "*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*" That's a guarantee.

We want to pray according to God's Word, according to God's will in His Word. He's promised to bless His Word. That's why I write out sermons because I want to make sure, as carefully as I can...I'm not saying it's infallible by any means...but I want as carefully as possible, whatever I say to reflect what is in this Word. I think it is helpful then, even for maybe somebody who's praying, to think through, "How can I make sure that the Word is leading praying." That we think through, "How can the Word lead us to adore, lead us to confess, lead us to intercede, to do these different things?" What we discover is, the more the Word is leading our worship, the more we are aligning with Spirit-led worship because the Spirit leads according to His Word.

So, that's why I hope you'll see, week by week, the Word prompting us to adore and confess, assuring us of pardon, saturating a sermon, leading us into communion and then guiding our intercession and our commission. Everything we do, we want the Word of God to prompt the worship of God. When that happens, the Holy Spirit is most definitely leading our worship. So, divine revelation: rhythm of revelation and response. I hope that will be evident.

Second, community participation, or a community of worshipers, not an audience of spectators. This is huge because you're sitting in theater style seats. I'm on a stage. It's easy for you to begin to...even unintentionally...begin to view yourself as a spectator in this scene. The only people I would say are potentially spectators in this room would be non-Christians in this room, which I am sure there are many non-Christians who are here this morning. In a sense, if you are here and not a follower of Christ, you are observing a people who have gathered together in Christ to worship God. So, there is certainly a participant element, but for every follower of Christ, you're a worshiper. So, we want to be more intentional about corporately praying like we did a second ago. Obviously, in singing we do that consistently, but in other ways...even involving other leaders and elders in leading us in worship to remind ourselves week by week that we are a community together. This is not a one-man deal or anything along those lines. There are no spectators in this room. Followers of Christ are all worshipers.

Third, reverent affection. This is where, based on what we've already seen, I just want to encourage us to approach the worship gathering of God's people in awe and reverence. What I'm talking about here is not even just the stuff on the outside, but the stuff on the inside. I want us to be a people who come into this room on a Sunday morning together with reverent affection in our hearts. Not buying games, not walking through a routine, not putting presumptuous looks on our faces, but really, honestly, authentically gathering together for worship...the awe-filled response of our hearts to the presence of God.

I'm not saying that this will look the same on the outside for each one of us. I certainly hope there's a freedom for you to express the desires of your heart, your adoration for God. There's freedom to lift your hands. There's freedom to bow on your knees at your seat or even in the aisle when we're confessing sin together; that you have a freedom to give awe-filled response of your heart to the presence of God. I'm not saying I know what that necessarily needs to...or that there is any way that that needs to look in any...in every individual in this room, but I do want to say this: casual worship before this God is not possible. It's not possible to consider the weight of the one we have gathered together to worship and anything about this to feel routine. So, I want to call us to reverent affection, and then pray that God would give us in this room just a palpable sense...you can feel it...reverent affection for Him. Then, that supersedes all of our lives as believers in this room.

Finally, I want to call us to worship marked by...characterized by dedicated attention. Now, the effect of some of these adjustments in our worship is, obviously, to heighten our understanding of the significance of what happens when we gather together for worship, but, specifically, when it comes to our attention to worship, I want to encourage you in four ways. Number one: I want to encourage you to come prepared. I want to encourage you to consider, "What can you do on Saturday night and/or Sunday morning to prepare for what we are gathering together for? How can you prepare your heart and your mind? How can you prepare your life? How can you prepare your spouse? How can you prepare your children? How can you prepare your family for what we're going to do?" To think intentionally, "Okay, this is an important time. How can I best prepare for it?" Come prepared.

Come eager, meaning, come with expectation. I want you to think about this. We're coming up, obviously, on college football season, and you can sense the anticipation in the air. People talk about what's going to happen. You think about a game...the sense of excitement that causes people to gather together for hours and tailgate beforehand then get in their seats in plenty of time to get the feel of the stadium and prepare for kickoff. You think about all the anticipation that goes into a college football game. Oh, brothers and sisters,

how much more...how much more should we anticipate a meeting together with God, the creator of the universe and Savior of our souls? I would encourage you this Fall, as these transitions are happening, as we're moving in this direction of our worship together, let me encourage you to intentionally work, work, work to rise above the trivialities of this world and see the truths of who God is. Don't let the adversary so fill your mind with that which does not matter that you have no room left in your mind and heart for that which matters forever. So, come eager.

Oh, God, make us...when we come together, when 9:00 hits, there's a sense of expectation, so people who have gathered together have said, "We're hungry for God! We're thirsty for God! We're looking...we've been looking forward all week to meeting with God!"

This, then, leads to third: be here early. I want to encourage you, as humbly and as gently and as seriously as I can, to be here early. Now, here's the deal. It is not uncommon for around 9:00, 11:00, 6:00...so, for this 9:00 to roll around and this room to be at most about half as full as it is right now. That's fairly common. Now, within 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 minutes, everybody has kind of strolled in. So, here's the deal. I want to be really, really careful here because I know that there are sometimes when you just have a rough morning where things at home...my friend and fellow pastor, Joshua Harris, talks about those mornings when you need to cast some demons out some kids. So, I know...I know that there are such mornings. I know that there are such mornings. I want you to consider that...I kind of joked about demons casting out...but I want you to consider the reality that it very well may be that the Adversary is trying to distract your mind for those hour or two before you come into worship. It would not be a surprising thing, would it be? Whether you have kids or not? So, I want to be careful because, nevertheless, there will still be those mornings.

The last thing I would want you to think is, "Well, we're running late, and so we might as just not even come." I don't want you to go there in your thoughts. Similarly, those of you who are here early, I don't want you to look at those who come in late with this self-righteous, Pharisee-ism, that just, "Do you not revere God?" So, don't do that. Don't do that. So, we've got to guard against a variety of things here, but on a whole, I want us to consider the possibility that regularly strolling in late is likely saying something about our spiritual condition or maybe even our approach to the worship of God in the church.

You say, "Well, I'm just late all the time. That's just me." Now, that actually is often me, but I remember one time I received an invitation to go to the White House. I am prone to be late. I was not late on that day. I had an invitation from the White House! I went to bed thinking about it. I set ten different alarms. Made sure I was there in plenty of time. So, how much more when you have been invited to meet with God? Far more important than a president for sure!

Can you imagine Exodus 19...thunder roaring, smoke billowing up...and half the people getting there late? So, I want to encourage you to be here early and to stay to the end. Sometimes...now, you'll notice how I've positioned this right in the middle of our worship gathering today, so that anyone who is early or late can hear this part. Stay to the end. Sometimes...doesn't it feel like when that last blank on the notes is filled in, it's like, "It's go time. Bibles closed. Plans made. Let's make a run for it."

So, I want you to look at what we're doing after we are in the Word: communion, an important, non-negotiable reality in our worship. Intercession...also important. Commissioning one another to go into the world...hugely important.

Now, to this point, I want to add one note of personal conviction when it comes to this early/late picture. We have not been...in leadership...good about time ending in our worship gatherings. This is no surprise to you, but the reality is, when that happens, when we go over, 95 percent of the time, that's the preacher's fault, i.e. my fault. I've really been convicted about this because I know that the reason some of you leave early is because you are serving in preschool and children's ministry, and you need to be at a certain place at a certain time to fulfill your responsibility. By us going late, you've had to leave early. I know that others of you come in late, especially at 11:00 worship gathering, people come in late because we finish late at 9:00, and parents pick up children late. Therefore, those people are still working, and they have to go get their kids and get into worship 11:10, 11:15. So, that's not good because I want to honor, particularly, those of you who are serving in this body, to make sure that you are able to worship from beginning to end. The same goes with parking and some of the reality that happens when we go late along those lines. So, I want to tell you that I am...we are, but really me...are going to work hard at finishing on time in our worship gathering, and in the process, as I work on that, I want to ask you to work on being here early and staying until the end, so that we see a holistic attention to all of worship.

All right. So, here's the deal. We're almost out of time, and we haven't even gotten to 1 Timothy. Turn there quickly, so I can keep my promise. The reality is I knew we were going to spend a lot of time on this anyway, and this is just an introduction to 1 Timothy. We're going to read just a couple of verses. In fact, go to 1 Timothy 3. We're going to read just two different places.

Our Church... An earthly outpost of a heavenly kingdom.

Okay, we've just talked about how our worship is intended by God to be an earthly expression of a heavenly assembly. As we start 1 Timothy this morning, in a similar way, I want us to see that our church, the body of Christ called The Church at Brook Hills, is intended by God, in your notes, to be an earthly outpost of a heavenly kingdom.

Here's what I mean by that. It's kind of a vague picture. We've talked about the kingdom of God before...the place and the people where God reigns as King...where Jesus reigns as King. We know that there's coming a day in the future when God's Kingdom will be perfect and complete...new heaven, new earth. We are perfectly under the reign of God...no more sin, sorrow, sadness, sickness, pain. Perfectly enjoying Him as King forever and ever. So, we know that that day is still to come, but while we wait for that day in heaven, God has designed His church on earth to be a picture of what His reign and rule looks like, albeit imperfect but still intended to be a picture that the world would be able to look at the church and see that's what the reign of God looks like among a people.

That's huge! That we would be a model, so to speak, of the Kingdom, an outpost, a picture that says to the world, "Do you want to see what the reign of God looks like in relationships between people, in families, in worship?" All the different things that we do, we are intended to show, manifest, what it looks like to live under God's rule and God's reign. 1 Timothy is all about God's design for how the church should behave.

The Setup

You look at 1 Timothy 3:14. Paul gives us the reason for his writing. He says, *"I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that..."* here it is, *"Here's why I'm writing you, Timothy."* *"If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth."* So, this is Paul writing to Timothy saying, *"This is what the household of God, the church of the living God, should look like so you'd know how to behave."* So, that makes this a very important book for a couple different reasons. Here's the setup in your notes.

Turn with me back to 1 Timothy 1. Let's just read the first two verses, and then I want us to just think very, very briefly through this. 1 Timothy 1:1-2. The letter starts, *"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."*

All right. From these two verses, I want you to see setup. This is...what we're going to read over the next 11, 12 weeks, this is a divine word from a chosen apostle. *"Paul, an apostle."* Now, that word has a general sense in which it means someone who has been sent, but it also has a specific sense all throughout the New Testament where it refers, specifically, to the twelve apostles, followers of Jesus who were eye witnesses to His resurrection, and Paul; how Christ entrusted twelve apostles and Paul with a unique authority to speak on His behalf at the beginning of the church. To say, unlike this dude who wrote this letter, *"I have a message from the Lord God Almighty,"* and to be able to speak that with authority from Christ. This is key. When we come to this letter, this is not Paul saying, *"Timothy, here's my opinion on what the church should look like"* or *"Here's some wisdom that I've got from years of experience doing this thing."* Instead, Paul is saying, *"This is a word from God."* God saying, *"Here's what the church should look like."*

That takes this letter and makes it extremely applicable to The Church at Brook Hills two thousand years later, because God is speaking these words to this church about all churches, including ours. So, this is a divine word from a chosen apostle, and that's important. Some people might think, *"Well, Pastor, eleven, twelve weeks in 1 Timothy? Come on. You're a smart guy. Why don't you come up with something a little more relevant, a little more entertaining, a little more applicable to our lives than some letter from a missionary to a pastor that was written 2,000 years ago?"*

The reason I'm not going to do that is because I love you and because I love this church! What we need are certainly not relevant, entertaining, applicable talks from me. What we need is divine, everlasting truth from God. What you need in your life, what you need in your family, what you need in your marriage, what you need in your parenting, what you need in your battle with cancer, in your battle with brain tumor, or whatever it might be, you need a word from God. So, that's why we'll spend the next eleven, twelve weeks looking at this book, because it's divine word!

Two, a struggling church with a young pastor. Now, this is where it gets applicable. Now, when I say struggling, I don't mean falling apart. The church at Ephesus is the church where Timothy was serving, and it wasn't falling apart, but as we're going to see next week and we'll talk about it more in detail, it was facing opposition and challenges from all sides. It was walking through difficulty, and Timothy was serving there as a pastor. This letter was written to Timothy with a view toward it being read to...understood by the whole church. So, this is a significant church.

Remember, when we studied in Acts, we saw the church at Ephesus. This is the center of church planting in Asia Minor. This is a very significant church that was facing a lot of pressure with a young pastor. Most estimate that Timothy was in his mid to upper 30's at that point. So, that makes me a baby pastor. I just turned 33. So, we are, in a real sense, a struggling church with a young pastor. Again, I don't mean struggling in the sense that we're falling apart, but we are a church that is facing various challenges, and I want us to talk about it in various ways in the days ahead...ways that do press in. I am most definitely a young pastor.

As we were thinking about, and I was praying about what I'm going to study this Fall, it was clear that the Lord was leading us to this book. So, in light of what we just walked through in worship, in light of intro to this book, these are the two desires I want to put before us that I hope will set the stage for our time over the next eleven, twelve weeks in worship and the Word.

We want our worship to be God-centered.

First desire: we do indeed want our worship to be God-centered. We want to be a God-centered assembly, and you look at these first two verses in 1 Timothy, you'll see four different titles for God. First, He is our Savior. He's the one who has saved us from our sin, saved us from ourselves. God is the one who, in eternity past, church, looked down in your life and set His affections on you, and sent His Son to bear the wrath of your sin upon Himself, to rise in victory over sin in the resurrection, so that you might be saved through faith in Him. You look in 1 Timothy 2:3, he says, *"This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."* If you are one of those non-Christians here this morning, I want you to hear more than anything else, as we've been talking about these different things in our church, I want you to hear that God is Savior, and He desires to save you from your sins. He has sent His Son, Christ, to pay the price for your sins on the cross, and to rise in victory and resurrection. I want to encourage you to trust in Him today as Savior. God is Savior.

He is our hope! Jesus Christ, our hope! Oh, to be reminded from the beginning! "Timothy, you're going through struggles! Never forget, you always have hope in Christ." He is our hope. He is our Father. *"Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father."* That when we gather together in worship, yes, let's think about the magnitude of God. He is universal, sovereign, reigning, King over all creation, but He is also Abba, Father, Dad. He's our Father and, He is our Lord. Jesus Christ; Christ Jesus our Lord. We submit to Him. We surrender to Him. We study His Word. Whatever He says, we do.

We want our community to be gospel-formed.

So, we want our worship to be God-centered, and flowing from this, we want our community to be gospel-formed. We want our community to be gospel-formed. I love the way Paul says, *"Timothy, my true child in the faith."* It's like he's saying, "Timothy, you've come from my own body. We're so together in relationship." That's what God has designed for the church to be. That's why we talk about faith family. We are together in this picture, and the gospel is what unites us together, brings us together and His grace, mercy and peace flowing in and around all that we do, just saturating our community together. Gospel-formed, and that's what 1 Timothy is all about...how the gospel affects everything that the church does, everything that happens in the household of God and formed by the gospel.

The gospel defines what we believe. We're going to see that next week...how the gospel guards. We must guard the gospel with our hearts and lives. Everything we have. The gospel affects how we pray. We'll see that in 1 Timothy 2. The gospel determines how we lead, and what should be expected of leaders in the church, 1 Timothy 3. The gospel

changes how we relate to one another. The gospel affects the way we talk to one another, give to one another, take care of one another. The gospel revolutionizes how we view possessions. It's a huge issue in our culture and context, and ultimately, we're going to see how the gospel drives how we do mission. 1 Timothy is going to show us how all these things inform the basis...biblical basis...for world evangelization.

Our Prayer...

So, here's the deal. As we introduce this book, think about transitions in our worship gathering and look toward the future, let's make this our prayer. When we gather together in this earthly expression of a heavenly assembly as an earthly outpost of a heavenly kingdom, let's pray, "O God, by your grace and for your glory, may your will be done in The Church of Brook Hills as it is in heaven. May your will be done in this community on earth as it is in heaven."

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