

Based on Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1:8-14 Pentecost 17; Proper 22

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, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, 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 until that day what I have entrusted to him. Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

2 Timothy 1:8-14

Foolishness. St Paul and his followers often talk about the faith as a kind of foolishness, or rather that those who hold to faith seem foolish to others. I think if we can step back from our faith for a minute, we could easily understand why some people might look at those who follow Jesus as foolish. We follow a man who was tried, convicted, and executed by the Roman Empire as a traitor; a man who promised lofty goals and yet who died piteously. Further, we claim that, actually, no, He didn't die at all – or rather, he *did* die, but he didn't stay dead but after he was alive again he decided not to stick around and show everybody, but left earth for some mysterious unseen place called heaven.

And probably worse, from the skeptic's point of view, to follow this undead Jesus, we must make sacrifices from our own wealth and well-being to help poor people and sick people. Following Jesus, can seem as though its all about the giving of ourselves, and wouldn't it be easier, the skeptic might say, and more fun, to give all that up and just do whatever makes you feel good right now?

But the author's point in this passage from the Second Letter to Timothy is that what may seem foolish is actually a kind of treasure that brings to those who commit themselves to the Way of Jesus, contentment and satisfaction and purpose; riches which the skeptic would likely never understand.

The Way of Jesus connects us to our deepest, truest selves, it connects us to one another, and it connects us the creative power that is the source of everything, to God. That we struggle to see creation and our fellow creatures in the way that God does, with love and dignity, speaks more to our selfish self-regard than it does to the foolishness or not of God's way.

Jesus invites us to open our eyes to see the world as it is, its beauty, its tragedy, its absurdity and to respond to what we see with love. When we move through our days, practicing generosity and mercy and turning away from competitiveness and jealousy, we become the people always desired that we would be and move closer to God. And when we move closer to the very source of being for all that is, we are in harmony with the created order, and it is that place where the peace which passes all understanding enters into our hearts and souls.

Blessings,

Jon