

SUNDAY WORSHIP, OCTOBER 20, 2024
SERMON: YOU ARE ANOINTED
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Scripture Reading

1 Timothy 2

2 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— **2** for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. **3** This is good, and pleases God our Savior, **4** who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. **5** For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, **6** who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. **7** And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.

8 Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. **9** I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, **10** but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

11 A woman^[a] should learn in quietness and full submission. **12** I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man;^[b] she must be quiet. **13** For Adam was formed first, then Eve. **14** And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. **15** But women^[c] will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Sermon: You Are Anointed

This is a tough scripture for obvious reasons. We have women speaking all over this church: Pie Pie spent a Saturday earlier this month teaching us; Myra often acts as the reporting authority to the congregation about the care and nurture of our members and friends; and of course, your Pastor is a woman, just to name a few. However, I chose to talk about this chapter from Timothy today because the entire Bible is important, and we can't simply gloss over the parts of it that make us uncomfortable or confuses us. When we cherry pick the parts of our faith that we like and ignore the parts that we don't, we risk making ourselves our own God rather than listening with integrity to He who calls us by name to follow Him.

Therefore, we are having another Bible Nerd day and you're going to have to put on those historical glasses that I sometimes ask you to wear.

You see, it's important to understand the context Timothy was facing as he led the community in Ephesus, which is in modern-day Turkey. "Context" is a word I'll often ask you to consider when wearing your Bible Nerd glasses, because *context* places the confusion and discomfort of some parts of the Bible, like 1 Timothy, into a story that is relatable and understandable for how we use it to deepen our faith 2,000 years later.

So, context: Ephesus was home to the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The Temple of Artemis was absolutely enormous. It was almost *double* the size of the

Parthenon in Athens, or about 20 square feet larger than an American football field (because, for some reason, we like comparing large sized things to “football fields”). The cult of Artemis dominated the city, influencing every aspect of life, from religion to politics.

Artemis, the goddess of the hunt, childbirth, and fertility, held sway particularly over women. Women in the Artemis cult had significant religious authority and influence, even over men, which was unusual for the time. In the rituals, women would often exercise this authority in a domineering, even violent, manner—an approach that contrasts sharply with the teachings of Jesus.

So why did people, especially women, who were drawn to Artemis, come to follow Jesus? It’s not surprising, really. Jesus offers something transformative: the promise of new life, equality in God’s eyes, and a relationship with a God who cares deeply for the oppressed. The Jesus movement offered hope beyond the confines of the old religious systems. For women who had authority in the Artemis cult, the Gospel provided a deeper freedom—freedom not rooted in domination but in love and service.

However, as they came into the Christian community, many of these new believers struggled to leave behind the practices and habits they had learned in the Artemis cult.

1 Timothy 2 addresses this tension. The community in Ephesus was being influenced by false teachers, many of whom may have been targeting the women who were newly converted from the Artemis cult. These women had been used to leading in very different ways—often through a harsh, menacing authority that had no place in the Christian community. The word Paul uses in 1 Timothy 2:12, ἀυθεντεύω, translated as “exercise authority,” can also mean “to violently dominate” or “murder.” I know “exercise authority” doesn’t necessarily mean “wield power to murder” in a modern context, but it did in Ancient Ephesus. The connotation for the time was that someone with authority generally had the capability and right to domineer and kill those lesser than them.

Paul specifically uses this word because it doesn’t have a place in Christian theology. Domineering, violence, mastering another person for the sake of power isn’t a Christian concept, because Jesus is the Lord of all of us and Jesus led with compassion, dignity, and transformative hope for all people, even and especially the lowest on the cultural ladder like prostitutes and tax collectors. Paul uses the word ἀυθεντεύω as an accusation that this type of worldly observation of power is being wielded by the recent converts from the Artemis cult, and it has no place in a Jesus following church.

It’s a strong term, and Paul isn’t just saying that women should be quiet. Instead, he’s addressing a specific problem: women, influenced by their past involvement in the cult of Artemis, were bringing a spirit of domination into the church. And Paul is clear—this cannot be. In Christ, there is no place for violence, domination, or oppression, whether by women or men.

We need to understand this passage in its context: Paul is urging the early Christians in Ephesus to be distinct from the cult of Artemis. You can’t follow Christ and still cling to the old ways. You can’t have one foot in both camps. Paul’s concern is that these new believers, especially the women, are trying to import the old ways into their new faith, and it’s causing problems. Faith in Christ demands transformation.

When we give our lives to Jesus, it’s a miracle. We are made new, and that’s something to celebrate! But often, our old selves try to break through. Our past habits and behaviors can creep back in, even after we’ve committed ourselves to Christ. And this is what was happening in Timothy’s

community—these new converts, fresh out of the Artemis cult, were bringing some of their old ways into the church.

Paul is not telling women to be silent forever. He's telling the women in this specific community that, until they have learned and matured in their faith, they shouldn't teach or dominate others. This is about ensuring that those who are teaching in the church are equipped with the truth of the gospel, not a mixture of Jesus and Artemis.

Alright, you can take those Bible Nerd glasses off and we can talk about what this means for us today: we may not come from the cult of Artemis, but we all bring our own baggage when we come to Jesus. When we surrender to Christ, we bring with us habits, attitudes, and worldviews from our former lives. And while the transformation is immediate in our souls, it takes time to work out the old patterns from our old selves. We need to be willing to sacrifice the bad habits of our pasts to step into what God has planned for our futures.

It may seem odd that the women of the Artemis cult made a decision to leave behind all that power and prestige to come be followers of Christ. Obviously, it was hard for them, and they took some of those old ways with them into Timothy's church. Likewise, it may feel odd to you to leave behind your own sinful comforts, whatever they may be, to follow Christ. It's probably also hard for you and you feel your baggage creeping back up sometimes.

Yet, anyone who has experienced Christ knows the unique freedom it provides beyond the worldly powers. Jesus provides a way for each one of us, no matter our background, to be empowered through giving our lives to Him. There is no hierarchy of world order in Jesus' Kingdom; we are all His hands and feet moving together to build a renewed future for every person.

The cult of Artemis used worldly power of hierarchy and quid-pro-quo to operate. The ability that Jesus provides to be made clean and new, not because of what sacrifices you brought to the Temple or what your family's last name is, but because of your willingness to follow Him into the purpose He calls you into. And we Christians know that freedom is more powerful than any worldly habit that we may feel so comfortable with.

Each person here, man or woman, is anointed by God to leave behind their old ways and become something new under His authority. We don't have to carry the weight of whatever titles of power the world gives us, because the ultimate Freedom of Christ is that all power comes through Him. We don't have to carry the weight of whatever coping mechanisms we use to relieve the stresses of the world, because He carries it for us on the Cross.

You are anointed with Christ's courage to lay down your bad habits that don't serve you and follow Him. You are anointed with Christ's forgiveness to let go of hateful or negative messages that you tell yourself that keep you trapped in shame. You are anointed by Christ's servant heart to let go of those small, worldly pieces of power or comfort you think you have and let Him show you what real power is.

The next time you feel tempted to devolve into your bad habits like anger, domineerism, self-pity, apathy, addiction, temptation – whatever it is that you bring from your old life that keeps you stuck in unhelpful patterns – remember this anointing that Jesus has placed in you. You're not trapped by your old habits, but set free in Jesus.

Let's remember: in following Christ, you are Anointed in the courage of transformation. But the old ways often die hard. Let's be willing to examine our own hearts and ask, "What do I need to surrender to God today? What old patterns, what baggage, might be holding me back from fully living into the future God is preparing for me"

And as we do, let us trust in the power of Christ to lead us—just as He led those new believers in Ephesus—into lives of grace, love, and purpose. Amen.