

Sermon Pentecost 19C
2 Timothy 3:14-4:5
Grace Lutheran
October 20, 2019

**In 2015, the Triple A Foundation for Traffic Safety sponsored a study
In which drivers were hooked up to brain activity monitors
And asked to drive in a controlled environment
While using their phones at stop signs and red lights.**

**The study revealed that even using hands-free voice commands
Left the driver distracted for around 27 seconds
After putting the phone down or completing
The voice commands.**

**At 25 mph, a typical neighborhood speed zone,
The vehicle travelled almost 3 football fields in length
Before researchers discerned the driver
Was paying attention to the road again.**

**Here in our area, that distance likely includes even more stop signs,
Certainly several alley and cross street intersections,
And any number of pedestrians and other vehicles
Moving in potentially conflicting directions.**

**If this is the result of a study in a controlled environment,
Imagine what could and does happen every single day
On roads across the country.**

**In fact, we don't have to imagine, state DMVs publish stark data
About traffic and pedestrian fatalities caused
By drivers distracted by technology in their cars.**

But it's not just phones in cars.

**We are a distracted people,
And our lives are very noisy.**

**News is sensationalized and shouted on the television,
Magazines and newspapers print salacious headlines
In 72 point font,
Advertisements tell us we're not good enough
But the product it's pushing will make us better,
And our own fragile psyches continue to nag us about
Our appearance, our intelligence, and our worth.**

**The narrative of our lives is clouded and convoluted
Because so many people and things
Are telling us what kind of person we should be
And what things we should have.**

**We are distracted,
And life is very noisy.**

**We don't exactly know what was going on in Timothy's ministry
That caused Paul to write again,
But we do know that Paul was languishing
In a cold Roman dungeon for the second time
As he wrote.**

**Christianity was still infantile
And was illegal throughout the empire,
A threat to the militaristic Pax Romana
And the Emperor's kingdom and godhead claims.**

**Into the noise of an unfavorable political and social system,
Paul urges his colleague to persist in proclaiming the Gospel.**

**Continue in what you have learned and fully believe,
Be persistent always,
Keep on proclaiming, keep on encouraging,
Keep on being patient.
Keep being alert, keep on suffering,
Keep on working,
Keep on carrying on.**

**Keep on carrying out the work of ministry
Because there will always be the noise of hate
That seems to drown out the proclamation of God's love.**

**Proclaim the Good News because there will always be times
When it seems like there is nothing but bad news
Everywhere else.**

**Preach, teach, and live Jesus
Because people will otherwise head off to scratch their ears
With whatever else confirms their already discerned bias.**

**And if you're sitting there thinking that Paul's letter
Could have been written to 21st century American Christians
Then you are exactly right!**

**The great joy of this inspired, God-breathing,
Living and life-giving Word
Is that it still means something to and for us, today.**

**But as for you, Dave, Ed, Margaret, Cindy,
As for you Grace Lutheran in River Forest,
Continue in what you have learned and firmly believe.
As for you, carry out your ministry fully.**

**Through the Spirit, God has drawn this congregation together
Because we need and long to hear
Good News in the midst of a noisy world.**

**In response to our baptismal callings,
You and me and we carry out ministry
Within and without these walls.**

**These stones create sacred space in which we worship,
Those classrooms foster learning and faith formation,
Your staff prepares bulletins, manages calendars,
Dream dreams, make plans, develop programs,
Walks with those who are hurting,
And waits with those who are dying.**

**The sunlit atrium offers glimpses of the resting places
Of saints who have gone before us,
And holds canvas bins into which we offer gifts and food
For those caught up in poverty and inequitable policies.**

**All the while supporting benevolent organizations that do all of this
In places we cannot be with people we do not know.**

**But none of this works without your carefully and prayerfully
Discerned financial offerings.**

**Without your response to the ways in which
God's Good News has cut through the noise of life
And revealed a love, peace, and hope
That cannot be found anywhere else.**

**We give not because it makes us feel better,
Or knocks a few dollars of our tax bill,
Or because we agree with everything in our congregation
Or even like our pew neighbors.**

**We give because it reminds us that we are stewards
Of everything God has first given us:
Our selves, our time, and our possessions.**

**We give because we are unafraid to live in the same abundance
Modeled for us in God's gift of Jesus crucified and raised.**

**We give because, together, we really do want
To carry out the ministry entrusted to us;
Ministry uniquely and purposefully given
To Grace Lutheran Church and School
For almost 120 years.**

**It is in faith that we make financial promises today.
Faith that these resources we give will be stewarded well
In support of the ministry to which we have been called.**

**It is through faith that we increase our levels of support
Because of the richness of God's gifts to us.**

**And it is by faith that we have learned and firmly believe
That salvation through Jesus Christ – the Good News of God –
Cuts through the noise and calls us God's own.**

We can always scratch on that.