

# TABLE TALK

Official Publication of the LMS-USA

...these words... shall be upon your heart; you shall  
teach them... and talk of them... Deut. 6:6,7



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## What Does Worship Look Like?

What does worship look like? is an appropriate question to introduce the articles in this issue of Table Talk. In his article, Justin Lomas [*Casual Worship*, page 2] shares his 'take' on worship in light of what he recently saw on a church sign as he drove by on the way to his office. The second article by Pastor Spears [*Where Two or Three are Gathered*, page 3] shares on the worship experience of his congregation when they were 'displaced' due to needed repairs on their church facility.

In the third article [*Is Preaching Relevant Today?* page 5], Pastor Erickson writes of what was historically, and should be yet today, central to our gatherings for Worship. Finally we have the Apostle Paul's exhortation to "*Preach the Word!*" [page 11].

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# Casual Worship

by

Justin Lonas

The cultural landscape of the Southern United States being what it is, I pass several churches each morning on my way to the office.

One in particular has a large sign out front trumpeting the latest, greatest ministries and programs they offer. For the past several weeks, however, the sign has advertised something they call "Casual Worship", presumably a low-key service with more upbeat music and relaxed dress standards designed to attract young adults and other unchurched individuals.

Good for them in trying to reach out to people who've left churches for all the wrong reasons but haven't been let go of by God. Their choice of words (and perhaps their methodology), however leaves much to be desired - true worship is anything but casual.

We were created to worship God and bask in the awe of his power and righteousness. Our fall into sin marred our relationship and made it impossible for us to live out our created purpose - as rebellious sinners, God in His holiness could no longer abide our presence. From that point on, our worship shifted from unashamed adoration to a meek response to His grace. Allen P. Ross, in *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation*, says that the essence of post-fallen worship consists of fear and adoration, confession and commitment, and ritual acts and religious observance.

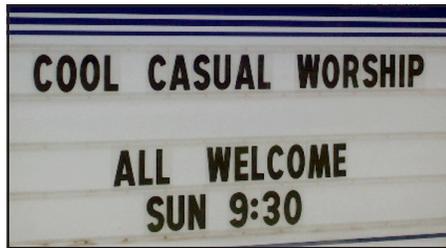
Because of the fall, God requires that sinful men approach him with the greatest reverence for his holiness. Before Christ, this took the form of the Levitic priesthood, the tabernacle and temple, and the rituals of sacrifice and cleansing. Our Lord isn't some spiteful, whimsical deity who delights in forcing us to go through a maze to find Him, but a gracious God whose sheer being

means that coming near Him on anyone's terms but His, means death. Non-casual worship is God's gift - He still wants to fellowship with us; we're

the ones who made it very difficult by rebelling against Him.

Christ's sacrifice removed the necessity of ritual for our right standing before God, but it doesn't give us the right to saunter into His presence on our terms. God is no less holy today than He was in the Old Testament, and while, through Christ, He no longer explicitly dictates about what we wear or eat in His presence, He is as concerned as ever with the attitude of our hearts. He wants our worship offering to be that of Abel (pure, undefiled, and sacrificial) instead of Cain (proud fruit of our own effort, from our bounty).

God can't abide someone who abuses the privilege, coming to Him as if He was of no more worth than any other of our friends and acquaintances. Worship of God should be the most intentional thing we do, consuming our thoughts and actions and shaping every area of our lives.



As Ross states, "The worshipper is never to be a passive auditor of the words and the ritual of worship. Neither is worship to be a dry routine nor a formless ecstasy. It is designed for the consecration of all our faculties to God."

Whether we mean to do it or not, too much of our worship is extremely casual - routine for the sake of routine is casual; ignoring God six out of seven days because we're not "at church" is casual; leaving our church services without receiving the conviction of the Holy Spirit is casual.

When we treat worship as a subjective, passive experience that only exists for our personal benefit - something that can be "casual", "formal", "traditional", or "contemporary" - we are utterly distorting God's design. He has called us to be "witnessing worshippers", proclaim-

ing His glory to a watching world. All our acts of worship should point to Him alone and say nothing about us other than that we are His own.

That same church sign says that the "casual worship" is held in the "activity center". If we don't desire to meet God on His terms, I'm afraid that that is all our churches can hope to be - hubs of activity "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Our God is not a casual God - everything He does has layers of meaning and purpose calibrated perfectly to His will. How dare we put Him in any sort of box? From now on, when I drive past that sign, I've asked God to make it a reminder to me to remember who He is and to avoid "casual worship" at all costs. The life of the Church depends on it.

Justin Lonas is editor of *Disciple Magazine*. This article is reprinted with permission.

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## Where Two or Three are Gathered

by

Rev. Dr. Ralph Spears

Recently, for several weeks, we have had to worship in a totally different setting. Our congregation has not used it since we began over a hundred years ago. This included the Ash Wednesday Table Communion Service as well in a house - our house - the parsonage, just inside Hancock County to the east. With the beauty and grandeur of our Church home, of rising ceiling, windows of stained glass, full organ, banners and carved oak fixtures up front, perhaps many did not expect it but we have experienced unique worship together, warm and meaningful and yes, we have even sung the hymns and the liturgy together without accompaniment! Many

have commented that they like it at least as well in our home location as in our familiar and beloved Church building.

This is Christian Worship retro because it is very close to the home based worship experience that the early Christian Church used for well over four to five hundred years. It was still many hundreds of years before the large cruciform shaped buildings of cathedral status like our own, began to be used in Europe and Asia Minor. As we know, such worship is magnificent and uplifting, and we have always been thankful for the setting that God has given us on East New York Street. Hope-

(Continued on next page)

*(Where Two or Three, continued)*

fully the archaic heat circulation pipes will be repaired and we will be back home there very soon. But the closeness, sharing and warmth of our last few worship experiences have



also been uplifting and in another way, magnificent in their own right. We have made full use of our liturgy, had each of our scheduled readers read their lessons on cue just before the Sermon and have experienced the fellowship and coffee hour afterwards. How? Why?

Because the promise of Christ that He will be present when but two or three are gathered together in His name is quite real; consubstantiation of bread and wine becomes the form for the actual body and blood of Christ as usual, and the Body of Christ functions in real presence. Everyone can feel this together.

This is why we worship in the way that we do: the liturgy gives the solid form and substance of Scripture, the Word is present with the appointed lessons of the two Testaments, and the Psalms and, the feeling of sharing the unique gift of the Holy Spirit is real. Hopefully the

Sermon is true to its purpose of proclaiming and teaching all of the above.

We can take this Service anywhere and it still works. Yes, the setting is important and many have commented on the ambiance of our Church home, and the worshipful feeling that is there. But the continuity is remarkable also at St. Matthew East, as we have dubbed our parsonage.

I have told the story of how my first Service and Sermon was in a Church held in a bar with the smell of stale beer and a jukebox, hidden behind the makeshift altar. Just moments into the worship, all of that really didn't matter. Worship happened and even that shaky sermon seemed to have some kind of wheels provided by the Spirit. The lesson to me was that the familiar 'shape' of the liturgical service carries us in whatever setting often to the profound amazement of all present.

The "personality" or skill of the leader or congregation is subverted to the importance of the Word and the form of Worship. Have you noticed that a hymn sing (without liturgy) or so called contemporary service just doesn't have the joyful solemnity of the worship? That is why sustaining the value of our worship is the solemn responsibility of the Council, Pastor and Congregation because it is a time proven formula that works: Invocation, Confessional, Absolution, (which were done at times the day before) Introit (seasonal), Gloria, Kyrie, Gloria in Excelsis, followed by the seasonal Collect, and Lessons, and then Creed(s) before the Sermon and just after the Hymn of the Day or Sermon Hymn. This has been used with some variation for centuries, in fact, for the past nineteen hundred or more years. Many similarities are found actually in the worship of the Hebrews for that is where this 'form' has its roots.

Martin Luther was responsible for

‘trimming’ back the Latin Mass of the Roman Church five hundred years ago, to a more manageable and traditional form. Over the years, they had augmented it with needless duplications, many of which they

(The Romans) have since also retracted with just one Kyrie, for instance, rather than three. The Sermon developed once more into a teaching form of proclama-

tion like the very early Church with the witness of the Apostles. The music as accompaniment to Divine Worship lifted the form to inspiring heights with song and instruments as noted in the Temple Worship by the "Praise Psalms" (such as 134, and 141 through 149) and instrumentation mentioned in the very last Psalm and also parts of Psalm 98. No wonder that Luther encouraged his Pastors in the study of music with the inspiring Hymns that he wrote himself. (This is a fascinating study

in itself!)

Why is it then, that the liturgy - the traditional liturgy, and traditional hymns are so inspiring? Why should they be encouraged even against the tide of contemporary 'liturgies' and

'hymns' many of which once analyzed are not really liturgical at all? Why should old forms



be encouraged? Because they ARE Scripture phrase by phrase, line by line, concept by concept. They are inspired snippets of Scripture knit together. Yes, one Psalm even bids us to "Sing a new Song to the Lord" but make it Scriptural please! Historic Liturgies and Hymns have taught us 'from one generation to another,' have acted as unforgettable Sermons and have brought us time after time by twos and threes, or more - to the feet of Christ, Our Lord!

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## Is Preaching Relevant Today?

by

Rev. Dr. John Erickson

Article VII of the Augsburg Confession states:

**It is also taught among us that the one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, constituted by men, should be observed uniformly. It is as Paul says in Ephesians 4:4,5, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism."**

(Continued on next page)

“We are indebted to Luther for having made the sermon the center of the worship service, and Christ the center of sermonizing” (Plass, Ewald M.: What Luther Says, p. 1126). Now some 500 years later, the opposite is happening in the majority of churches who trace their beginnings back to the Protestant Reformation. In many churches a 10 or 12 minute sermon would be the norm, and the subject matter is not so much Christ as it is psychology or some kind of motivational speech, with of course, Christ somehow thrown in.

But according to the Confessions much serious consideration should be given to the sermon and the “preaching of the Gospel in its purity” along with administration of the holy Sacraments “according to the Gospel.” Further, in a time when there seems to be so much division in the church, it seems one’s understanding and practice of preaching has something to do with that also. For according to our Confessions, the Word, and the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments in accordance with that Word, is vital to the true unity in and of the church.

The Gospel writer Luke (4:10-19) has recorded for us what was our Lord’s emphases as He set out on His earthly ministry. “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” When Jesus had completed his work on earth he commissioned his disciples, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.



And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:18-20).

How the disciples understood all this is seen in how they began their ministry on the day of Pentecost, on the birth day of the New Testament Church. In the midst of all the confusion of that day, “Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.’” With these words Peter began the first sermon preached in the New Testament Church. And what was the result of his preaching? The answer is found in Acts 3:37-38. “When [the crowds] heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

Luke also records for us what was to happen when Jesus’ ministry here

on earth was completed. "He [Jesus] said to them [His disciples], 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.' Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem'" (Luke 24:44-47).

The disciples were told that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached. Who was to do it? They were. And that is what they did. And that is what we are to be about today. It is no different today than it was in the days of the apostles. When it comes to the salvation of souls, first and foremost, repentance and forgiveness must be brought to the attention of every man, woman, and child throughout the whole world. All are by nature sinners and desperately wicked. All need to be told of the necessity of repentance because without repentance and conversion, no one can enter the kingdom of God (Acts 2:37-38; John 2:5). All need to be told of God's readiness to forgive any and all who believe in Christ Jesus (John 1:12; Acts 16:31). All are by nature guilty and condemned, dead in trespasses and sins. But it is also true that anyone may obtain by faith in Jesus, free, full, and immediate pardon (2 Pet. 3:9). It is also important that the message is made clear, that repentance and forgiveness of sins are inseparably linked together. It is not that our repentance can purchase or earn our pardon. Pardon is the free gift of God to the believer in Christ. But it is also the case that a man impenitent, is a man unforgiven. Paul summed up his preaching and that of his companions in these words

Note: Paul's quoting of the Old Testament, demonstrates that preach-

ing is not new to the New Testament Church. It has always been central in the bringing of people to faith:

*"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*

Romans 10:13ff

We are saved by grace through faith. It is not of ourselves. It is not of works. It is the gift of God. And even the faith that saves is a gift that comes to the believer as a result of the hearing of the message. And that message is heard through the word of Christ.

**The word of Christ.** As already mentioned, Luther saw the necessity of making Christ the center of the sermon. Luther, in preaching on Deuteronomy 6:6-8, spoke of the necessity of the preaching of this Word.

**I myself know people who think we do not need any preachers or pastors and that we must put up with the clerics because of ancient usage and custom. They hold that the salary and expense annual devoted to them might well be used in other and better ways. They speak as though preachers were (as the man said) a necessarium malum (a necessary evil). Especially the noblemen and wiseacres say: After all, we have books from which we can read the message just as well as we hear it from the clerics in the church. The devil, who has taken**

(Preaching, continued on next page)

possession of you, moves you to say this about your reading. If our Lord God had known that the ministry is unnecessary, He would certainly have been wise and prudent enough not to have Moses preach to you. Moreover, according to your godless, devilish, foolish thinking and speaking, there would have been no need for God to ordain the Levitical priesthood later on and always to send out prophets, as He Himself says He did (Matt. 23:34). He would no doubt also at this time bid preachers and pastors stay home. Nor would He have deemed it necessary to command parents diligently to teach the Word and not neglect it.

In this same vein, there are those who claim to be able to dispense altogether with preachers of the Word. Luther refers to people like this in a sermon on Matthew 7:15-23 which he preached in 1532.

**Many people now say: We have already read and learned the Gospel; we know it well and are in need of nothing. Nay, many people say bluntly: Why do we need pastors and preachers any longer? After all, we can read the Gospel at home. So they go on their way, but they do not read Scripture at home either; or if they do read it, the Word is not as fruitful and effective as it is when proclaimed by the public preacher whom God has ordained to expound and explain it to people.**

We know it does not make sense to a great many people today, but Scripture is clear in this, it pleases God to use man as His agent or instrument of communication. Luther touches on this in a sermon preached in 1531 based on John 6:45-46.

**John would say: Whoever would be in Christendom and be called a member or disciple of the Lord Christ must by all means hear God Himself. How, then, do I hear Him? A sectarian runs into a corner, closes his mouth, and need neither**

**read nor hear; but he waits until our Lord God speaks with him, waits for the Spirit, and then says: Ah, this is what God teaches me! Nay, it's the devil on your head! To be taught by God Himself is to hear and learn the Lord Christ's Word from him and to be sure that it is God's Word. This is hearing God Himself; and though an ass were to do the speaking, as in the case of Balaam (Num. 22:28), it would none the less be God's Word. Just so you are hearing God the Father Himself when you hear a sermon from St. Paul or from me; and you do not become my pupil but the Father's pupil; for I am not speaking, but He is. Nor am I your master; but both of us have one master and Teacher, the Father; and both of us are pupils too, except for the fact that the Father is speaking to you through me.**

When it comes to God communicating with people, on the basis of Scripture it seems clear, people cannot hear without someone preaching to them; but it is also clear that the one who is preaching is to be none other than one God has called and sent as proclaimer (preacher) of his holy Word.



The importance of the role of preacher cannot be underestimated. In making a quick count I came up with one hundred thirty-three references to preaching in the Bible (Old as well as New Testament). The way to salvation has not changed since the promise made to Adam and Eve back in Genesis 3:15. It is the way of righteousness by faith (see Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3). And in order that the message of righteousness by faith might be proclaimed, God has

throughout all ages, called forth preachers to carry out that task.

We see an example how all this works in Luke 24, a passage I touched on earlier. Jesus tells his disciples, "These are the words that I spoke to you while I was yet with you... which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me [remember... faith comes through hearing the words of Christ?]. Then (verse 45) he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." Jesus left this earth, and he sent the Holy Spirit to be, for us, another counselor. One of the works of the Holy Spirit is to do for us what He did for the disciples after Jesus had ascended to the Father. Jesus told them, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper... he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (Jn. 14:16, 26).

When Jesus spoke (preached) to his disciples, and they opened their ears to hear, not only were they given the gift of faith, he also opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. The same happens today. When the Word of God is preached in its purity, the Holy Spirit who is present in that Word and in the heart of the believer, will take that Word and open the hearts of those who hear to an understanding of it. Those who sat under the preaching of the Word on that day so long ago when the church was born, had ears to hear. And what was the result? About 3000 souls were baptized and added to the church on that one day! The Word has not changed. The potential as to what can happen when the pure Word is preached has not changed either. Let us pray for open hearts and ears to hear as we attend to the preaching of the word in our churches. There are those who 'listen' but who as yet are not really 'hearing.' Let us pray for them also that their ears might be opened. And let us pray also for

those who have not as yet had opportunity to hear.

Let us also pray for preachers; for continued strength and faithfulness for the called who are now preaching. But then also, as our Lord asked us to do, let us "ask the Lord of the harvest... to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matt. 9:38). The task of the preacher is a most important and challenging task. The charge of Paul to young Timothy makes this fact abundantly clear: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry." The task of the preacher is no less important or difficult as it was in the days of Paul.

When the disciples returned to Jerusalem following the ascension of our Lord we read something rather interesting. See Luke 24:52,53. "The disciples "returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God."

Their Savior, not that long ago was taken from them, and crucified. They had been with him for three years. Now, their nearest and dearest friend, was gone! It was devastating! But he had risen from the dead! He was once again alive and with them! They were people of great joy! But now, having just gotten used to having him with them once

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again, and he is gone once more. You would think that would have completely devastated them. But no. After their Lord departed from them this time, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. How was that possible?

The answer is quite simple. They rejoiced with great joy because for the first time they saw things clearly with regard to their Master. The veil had been removed from their eyes. The darkness was over. The meaning of their Lord's humiliation... the meaning of his

cross, of his suffering and death... the meaning of his being the Messiah and at the same time a sufferer... the meaning of his being crucified and at the same time, the Son of God...

all this and more was now made plain. They saw it. They understood it. Their questions and doubts were gone. Their stumbling-blocks were removed. They now had clear knowledge, and that knowledge gave them joy.

Something that few people realize today, is that a persons degree of joy is in direct proportion to the knowledge they possess. Dim, indefinite, and ambiguous views of the Gospel are what is behind the discomfort and lack of joy in many believers. When our Lord is not clearly known and understood, it follows that can be little real "joy in the Lord."

And for us... what we need to know is available to us. The spiritual knowledge we need is at hand. John informs us that what we find in his gospel, and this is true for all of Scripture, "is written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believ-

ing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Nothing can bring a person more joy than knowing that they have real life now, and for eternity. And that life, eternal life, is found only in Christ Jesus (1 John 5:11).

That "written word" is what the preacher is called to preach, to proclaim, and to teach. He is to be the "preacher of the Word." And when that Word is preached, it is the same word that was spoken at the beginning time. God spoke, and "it was so."

The Word had creative power. The Word still has creative power... power to make all things new. As we read in John 6:63, "It is the Spirit



that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." And in John 6:68 we find Simon Peter answering Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? *You have the words of eternal life.*"

Those who hear and take to heart the preached Word are given faith (Rom. 10:17) and made new creations (2 Cor. 5:17). By means of the Word they grow in grace and understanding. All this results in joy: "Blessed... are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Lk. 11:28). Notice it is not to merely 'hear' it, the preached word must be truly heard, taken into the heart... put into practice... kept... obeyed. Such, as were the disciples of our Lord, are blest. It is such who know know the joy of the Lord.

The preaching of the Gospel in its purity is absolutely relevant to the church today!

# Preach the Word!

A commentary on 2 Timothy 4:2

**The admonition of Paul to young Timothy is most relevant for the church of today, to see the sermon is given its rightful place in our gatherings for worship.**



What is Timothy to do with the Word? “Preach it!”

A preacher is a herald. A herald is vested with authority to proclaim publicly the official messages of a king or high official. The office of herald precludes permission to devise a message of his own. As one commentator describes preaching or heralding, “It is the earnest proclamation of news initiated by God. It is not the abstract speculation on views excogitated by man.” Sermon writing, as well as preparing lessons for instructions and Bible classes, is a challenging assignment for the pastor. He must communicate only the message His Lord has given him to proclaim. This, however, is not a command to do this in a dull, uninteresting, stereotyped manner. A clear and lively presentation shows the herald’s concern that the Lord’s message may be heard with understanding.

“Be prepared in season and out of season.” Timothy should stand ready to serve as herald of the Word at every opportunity the Lord presents. We recognize many opportunities as being “in season.” Certainly that is true when the pastor stands in the pulpit on Sunday morning. The Lord gives other opportunities that to us may seem “out of season.” It is important for us to be ready then too and not excuse silence with saying, “It was not the right time.” On the other hand, this is not a command to be rude and overbearing in fulfilling this command or to force the Word on those who clearly reject it. Jesus had something to say about that (Matt. 7:6; 10:14).

Let the pastor never find it inconvenient for himself to speak the

Word.

The unbeliever and those who require admonition may look upon whatever time the pastor may wish to speak the Word with them as “out of season.” There is no “out of season” for the pastor, however, when the Lord says, “Speak.” What we read in Proverbs, nevertheless, also is true: “A man finds joy in giving an apt reply - and how good is a timely word!” (Proverbs 15:23). A “timely word” is a word spoken at the right time. Sometimes circumstances may invite rejection. We trust the Lord to guide us. He even promises that in difficult situations the “Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say” (Luke 12:12). So a pastor must preach and teach and keep on preaching and teaching.

As he preaches the Word, Timothy is to “correct, rebuke and encourage.” Only three verses before this, Paul had said that the Word of God is useful “for rebuking.” The same basic word is used here. To “correct” is to rebuke in the sense of exposing sin, of convicting of sin. The word translated “rebuke” in this verse adds to the thought of exposing sin and also to the idea of chiding and severely censuring someone for his sin. To “correct” and “rebuke” are both negative and by themselves will not cause a godly change. Timothy must “encourage,” that is, with the gospel he must free the conscience from sin and “from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14). Timothy must preach both law and gospel; the law to show the damage sin has done to us and the gospel to build us up with

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Table Talk  
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The LMS-USA is Lutheran Church body describing itself as *Biblical, Confessional, Evangelical, Liturgical and Congregational*. It is a 'Forum' in which there is an on going discussion of theological issues and concerns among clergy and lay alike. The LMS-USA meets annually for a Theological Conference and this publication, besides carrying news of the Ministerium and Synod, functions also as a vehicle for this continuing dialogue.

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the love and mercy of a gracious God in Christ. The preacher must be able to say with Paul, "I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God" (Acts 20:27).

"With great patience and careful instruction," Timothy is to do his preaching, rebuking, and encouraging. Often we are tempted to look for quick results and give up when they aren't forthcoming. Let us, rather, strive to instruct with even greater care, explain things more clearly, and pray to the Holy Spirit to open the heart of the listener and bless the Word according to God's promise. Should not the patience God has with us move us to "great patience" in our service of others?

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