

2nd Sunday of Lent (2026) – Year A

Here's a quote: "Everyone wants to be liked; everyone wants approval, but no one likes to be ignored."

I'm not sure who wrote that, but my best guess is the author of the Second Reading.

Now, just in case you have forgotten that we even had a Second Reading, it was Paul's second letter to Timothy. Let me read it to you again, one verse at a time.

Verse 8:

"So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for his sake; but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God."

Now, in order to understand why Paul wrote what he wrote, and why the Church wants us to listen to these three verses every third year, we have to know a little bit about Timothy, the one to whom Paul is writing.

Timothy, it seems, was a bit hesitant and somewhat anxious about preaching the gospel to an audience, not quite as nice as you. Timothy was confronted with the temptation to water down the gospel in the face of very hostile opposition.

I hope we can appreciate the very human and flawed Timothy; he is a source of great comfort. For how well we know the fear that accompanies our efforts to witness for Christ, in the face of ridicule and rejection.

Paul dearly loves Timothy, and he chose him to be the first bishop of the Christian church in Ephesus. However, Paul bluntly and candidly lays it right on the line for the young man. “Timothy, you must be prepared to suffer for the sake of the gospel.”

Now, Paul is not sitting at some Marriott resort overlooking the Mediterranean, sipping sweet drinks. He is writing this letter from prison, in chains, awaiting his execution. Paul knows quite well about the necessity of suffering for those who wish to embrace the gospel.

And so, Paul implores Timothy with the words: “Do not be ashamed.”

The worst thing Timothy could do was to be a cause of scandal and dishonor to his fledgling flock by withdrawing from the duty of proclaiming the gospel, or to fear the burden of suffering. He must be bold and brave—not giving in to the temptation of leaving out some of the more challenging parts of Christ’s Good News.

Verse 9:

“[God] saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works, but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began,”

In this one verse, Paul summarizes the entire New Testament.

He says the heart of the gospel, indeed its sole purpose, is to tell the good news about a God who has saved us and who has called us to a new way of living.

What God accomplished in Christ is the promise of our salvation— rescued from a judgment deserving of eternal punishment. God decided to do for us what we ourselves could never do— to bring us into right relationship with Him.

Salvation is grace—a free and undeserved gift from God, and Jesus is God’s way of making that grace accessible to everyone.

[and finally] Verse 10:

“but now made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

2,000 years later, we remain in the age of “unfinished business”—the time between Christ’s resurrection and his Second Coming. We are still waiting for the promised gift of eternal life. We have not yet been released from this world as Christ has in his Resurrection and Ascension.

Jesus paid our debt. When He died for our sins; death no longer has any claim on us. It is like financial debt. Once you pay it, your creditor no longer has any hold on you.

I hope you understand a little better why Paul was so concerned with Timothy. Paul had entrusted Timothy with the ministry of proclaiming the gospel to save souls.

So urgent and pressing was this task that it required his complete devotion, even to the point of suffering, so that Timothy might preach, “in season and out” the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

