# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“How Should We Then Live?”**

**1 Timothy 4:8-13**

 **March 13, 2022**

Last Sunday we read from Paul’s first letter to Timothy while asking the question, “For whom should we pray?” Paul’s response to that question, found in the first four verses of the second chapter, is to pray for all kinds of people, including kings and those in authority. All kinds of people, even those who are a part of a group that I don’t particularly like or agree with? Yes, all kinds of people. For kings and those in authority, even those who are doing terrible and ungodly things? Yes, for kings and those in authority. Whether it was the Roman Emperor in Paul’s day or the Russian President in our day, we are called to pray for him. This is pleasing to God, for he wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.

In our text this morning from the fourth chapter of Paul’s letter to Timothy, we will continue to discover what is pleasing to God, especially as it relates to how he would have us live in this world where so much is going wrong. I invite you to read along with me from 1 Timothy 4:8-13

“Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.” This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it. This is why we work hard and continue to struggle, for our hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all people and particularly of all believers. Teach these things and insist that everyone learn them. Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them.

How should we then live in these troubled times? We should live as Christians have always been called to live: as people who are training for godliness. The world wants to shape us in worldliness so that we will conform to its values which include using power for our own sake, using love to please ourselves, and considering our own needs as more important than the needs of others. God want to shape us in godliness in which we are conformed to his values, using influence for God’s sake, using love to please others, and considering the needs of others before our own.

To train in godliness is to become like Christ. While salvation is the freely given gift of being born again, becoming like Christ requires intentional and ongoing effort. It requires a long obedience in the same direction. You cannot drift into godliness. It takes work and it’s a struggle, says Paul, but it’s worth it because our hope is in the living God. What king, what philosophy or lifestyle or educational initiative or government program will fix this broken world in which we live? Our hope is in God for only God can redeem this mess that we have created here on earth, and he has promised to do precisely that.

How do we train? What do we work on? Paul tells us in verse 12. We work on our speech and we work on our conduct. We make our speech and our conduct more like Christ’s which was loving, faithful, and pure. Our goal is loving, faithful, pure speech and loving, faithful, pure behavior.

In what we say and in the way we live, we practice love. We are not arrogant or rude or contemptuous. Instead, we are patient and kind and hopeful that God in his mercy will bring about salvation and an understanding of the truth.

In what we say and in the way we live, we practice faithfulness. We are faithful to God’s revealed truth, standing up for it even when others ridicule, oppose, or ignore it. We are faithful to our commitments, showing ourselves trustworthy and dependable.

In what we say and in the way we live, we practice purity. We don’t use vulgar, obscene or profane words in our speech. We refuse to be drawn into pre-marital or extra-marital sexual misconduct. If we’re going to talk the talk, we must also walk the walk.

As we become like Christ, we will begin to deal with the world as Christ dealt with the world. The world saddened him, but it didn’t take away the joy he had in his heavenly Father. Is the world taking away your joy? The world frustrated him, but it didn’t keep him from fulfilling his mission of speaking and living God’s good news. Is the world frustrating you? The world opposed him, but it didn’t keep him from loving the world in order that they might be saved and come to understand the truth. Is the world quenching your love? The world was not pleased with him, but his life’s purpose was not to please the world. His purpose was to please his Father. How wonderful it was for him to hear God’s voice speaking from heaven: “This is my Son, with whom I am well pleased.” Is the world being pleased with you more important to you than God being pleased with you?

How should we then live in a world where there is so much pain and conflict and sorrow and fear? The movie, *Chariots of Fire,* is the real-life story of Olympic runner Eric Liddell who was committed to physical training and even more so to spiritual training. When asked about his motive for running, he said, “God made me for a purpose. God made me fast and when I run, I feel his pleasure.” When we live as God would have us live, when we are training ourselves to be godly that we may become like Christ, we are doing what God made us to do. When we do so, we will feel his pleasure and we will know that we are fulfilling life’s greatest purpose.