

LCC NATIONAL PASTORS AND DEACONS CONFERENCE

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„In Your Light, We See Light: For the Sake of God's People“

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Lectures on the 2nd Letter of St. Paul to Timothy:

„Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect...“

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Quotations from the Bible are taken from the “New King James Version”.

Quotations from the Lutheran Confessions from ”The Book of Concord”,

edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, Minneapolis 2000

(in the text referred to as “Kolb-Wengert”).

This presentation will be divided up into three chapters, each of them subdivided into several paragraphs. The chapters are the following:

- I. Introduction to a Pastoral Letter
- II. What does it mean to be Christ's Servant?
- III. Some Observations and Conclusions.

A couple of years ago a new archbishop was installed somewhere in the Anglican church in Britain. And when he met for the first time with the chapter of his cathedral, a group of grey-haired elderly clergymen, he asked them: „Are you on fire for the Lord?“ After a minute of speechlessness, disconcerted surprise, they all nodded their heads and murmured „Yes, we are“. What else should they have said? But: it was quite clear at this moment that they were not on any fire whatsoever, not to speak of “fire for the Lord”.

Now, I am not here in Calgary to set you on „fire for the Lord“. And I guess, even that archbishop back there in England couldn't do it in his place. Nor could your beloved President, nor any great theologian. Luther couldn't do it nor any other hero of the Reformation period. Not even St. Paul could do it. It's only the Holy Spirit who can do that „where and when it pleases God“ (Augsburg Confession, Article V). And therefore, I think, we have good reason first of all to pray for Him to come, to be in our midst, in our hearts, in our minds. Let us do so with words from the wonderful hymn by which Martin Luther taught us to implore God's Holy Spirit:

„Come, holy Fire, comfort true,
Grant us the will Your work to do
And in Your service to abide;
Let trials turn us not aside.
Lord, by Your pow'r prepare each heart,
And to our weakness strength impart
That bravely here we may contend,
Through life and death to You, our Lord, ascend.
Alleluja, alleluja! Amen.

I. INTRODUCTION to a PASTORAL LETTER

We turn now to the 2nd Letter of St. Paul to Timothy, and I take it for granted that you all have read this letter in preparing for this conference. If not, you at least have brought along your Bible and have it with you now. I do not intend, however, to give an exegetical lecture (or several of them) dealing with all the details, its context, its genesis, its formation and so on. I would rather like to show you how this letter to Timothy, written in a totally different time, under totally different circumstances, to a totally different addressee, nevertheless speaks to us, concerns us, gives us orientation and guidance. It's not just a piece of literature from ancient times. It's far more than that.

1. „Hiera grammata“ - Holy Script

This 2nd Letter to Timothy is „graphe theopneustos“ (3:16), a script given by God's Spirit. It is „hiera grammata“ (3:15), not because of its age, or its composition, or whatever makes it so special, but only because this letter is an instrument, a tool by which the Spirit is speaking; first to Timothy, now to us, even today. God has decided to utter His voice through this letter, and it's His voice which places us into a position similar to Timothy's. Similar, though, not equal in every respect. This we have to keep in mind.

You may have noticed that I just started out with emphasizing the authority which this letter has over us. It's not to entertain us; not to meet our curiosity. It is only to teach us and to make us ready to serve this Lord under whose authority St. Paul was placed and wrote to Timothy. It's not that we have to adjust this letter to us and to our feelings and understanding, to our situation, to the concept we may already have developed. It is not that we should find in this letter some support, some confirmation for our own ideas. It is precisely the other way around (as it is, by the way, with all other Holy Scripture as well): not we are above this Scripture and have to master it, but this letter is to master us, to correct us, to teach us. We have to ask what orientation it will give to us with respect to our ministry today as Lutheran clergy in the 21st century.

„Hiera grammata“ (3:15) and „graphe theopneustos“ (3:16) are expressions which clearly demonstrate the conviction that the Scriptures are holy, divinely inspired by God's Spirit. This conviction is common throughout the entire New Testament, though in our context this terminology is referring to the Old Testament only as the Holy Scriptures of Israel. It goes along though with the

conviction that only a Christ-confessing and Christ-centered understanding of the Old Testament opens and discloses these Scriptures in their fullness and deepest meaning. „Ta hiera grammata“, when used by Paul, is in fact a *terminus technicus* for the Old Testament, namely in the Greek translation, commonly used by the Jews in the diaspora of the Hellenistic world. „Hiera“ reminds us of the cultic background, the worship context in which the words of the Old Testament came to hearers and worshipers, thus confronting them with the will of God. Likewise the New Testament scriptures, including St. Paul's Letters to Timothy and Titus, as they were recited in the divine service of the church, thereby became linked with worship. In this way they became „hiera gram-mata“, evidently effective in creating faith and justification and sanctification. The „dynamis“, the power of the Holy Spirit, was with them. The formerly Jewish term “hiera grammata”, at first referring to the Old Testament, later on passed over into the Ancient Church's terminology for the Sacred Scriptures altogether, including the New Testament, confessing them as being „theo-pneustos“, God-inspired. This “pasa graphe theopneustos”, by the way, is a „hapax legomenon“, a unique expression only found in 2nd Timothy (3:16), but in its essence of fundamental importance for St. Paul's understanding of the Scriptures in general. And this becomes quite evident in the way in which he quotes them, i. e. the Old Testament, since the New Testament was not yet or only partly written and everywhere in use.

As we go through this piece of Holy Script, we have to accept it as “hiera grammata”, “graphe theopneustos”. I will at first draw your attention to the one who wrote it, later on to the addressee. And this should give us an idea of what actually characterizes this letter, what St. Paul is speaking about and what this means to us, how we are involved.

2. Paul – the Apostle

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, a beloved son“, that's how this letter starts out. Paul is using a traditional pattern to introduce himself and the addressee, but these words are one by one precisely selected and bear a profound meaning. He calls himself an „apostle“ (in the Greek original without any article, i. e. without an „an“ or a „the“ before the word apostle), indicating that apostolicity is not a limited mandate or charge, limited in terms of time, or of field or of capacity. Instead, he is the legitimate representative of his Lord, „an ambassador for Christ“ (II Cor. 5:20), imploring in Christ's stead, on Christ's behalf, fulfilling an office and carrying out a task which is not of human origin. To be or become “apostle“, that is not invented by the church. It is divinely instituted and originates from Christ's own office and ministry. The mission of the Son, sent by the Father, is conferred upon Apostles in order that the Son's

mission may be continued: „As the Father has sent Me, I also send you“, says Christ (John 20:21), and the Greek word for „to send“, namely „apostellein“ is found again in the substantive „apostle“ - a person who has been sent. We are dealing with an ongoing process that God Himself began. The mission which began with Christ being sent by the Father, and His Apostles being sent by Him, has not come to an end with apostles like St. Paul. Instead, the apostles themselves had to find someone beyond their own person to carry on. We learn from the Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul that he had authorized Paul and called “a true son in our common faith” (Tit.1:4), was left in Crete to “appoint elders in every city as I [St. Paul] commanded you” - this shows us: the ministry has to go on.

Behind this “institution” of “apostellein”, i.e. appointing, commissioning, sending an authorized person who is representing the one who sent him, we have to detect something which was common and practiced among the Jewish people at that time. And now I quote from a brief essay which I published in 1996 under the title “The Christological Character of the Office of the Ministry and the Royal Priesthood” (p.7):

“If we look into the Jewish tradition we find the institution of a 'shaliach' (Hebrew for 'messenger', 'ambassador', or 'representative of a rabbi'). About this 'shaliach' we learn from Jewish sources that such a messenger of a man is exactly like that man himself (Mishna Berachot 5:5) with the same rights and authority as the one who sent him. In fact, this ambassador could even legally sign a marriage contract for his rabbi [binding the poor rabbi for a lifetime!]. Imagine what would have happened if that rabbi could not trust his 'shaliach'. The representative would have signed a legal marriage contract and his rabbi would be married! It is a legal and judicial institution in the Jewish tradition, ... clearly defined in its form, while the contents (what a 'shaliach' had to do) could vary from situation to situation. The 'shaliach' did not always go out to sign a marriage contract. He could do many other things as well. His work depended on the master's mandate and instruction. [But he could fully represent him and act on his behalf]. God in His wisdom used a tool already at hand. He gave himself into patterns which already existed. This institution of a 'shaliach' comes to a unique use in the apostle. Christ represents God. The apostle represents Christ. Likewise the minister in the office of the holy ministry, when he does what his Lord wants and appoints him to do, is representing Christ”- not replacing, by no means, but representing.

This biblical concept is echoed in Article VII, § 28 of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession when speaking about the ordained servants in the church: “They represent the person of Christ on account of the call of the church and do not represent their own persons, as Christ himself testifies

[Luke 10:16] 'Whosoever listens to you listens to me'. When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they offer them in the stead and place of Christ" (Kolb-Wengert, p. 178). "This is quite remarkable. There is no inherent quality of any kind which the minister contributes to or determines this representation. It does not come from the minister. It is Christ in him" (The Christological..., p. 7). The decisive foundation of the apostolate lies in Christology: an apostle can fulfill his ministry in entirety and full of value only as an appointed messenger of the crucified and risen Christ. "It is Christ using him as a tool and an instrument. This representation does not take place because the minister is more holy or closer to God or anything like this. It only and exclusively takes place because Christ himself has chosen him, called him, and authorized the minister. The minister only and exclusively represents Christ when he does what Christ appointed him to do" (l.c. p. 8).

That's what we have to keep in mind when we hear St. Paul introducing himself as "apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" (1:1). As apostle he has authority to teach, to admonish, to comfort, to give orders to Timothy, his "beloved son" (as he calls him), and to the church universal, including to us who read his letter today. And that is true because he has been appointed, called, and authorized by Christ Jesus whom he confesses as his Lord, i.e. the "kyrios". It is Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, who stands right behind the Apostle when speaking to Timothy.

3. The "Kyrios" and His Gifts

It is striking that you will find the "kyrios"-title used quite often in this letter. But now and then it is impossible to find out whether it only refers to God the Father or to Jesus Christ as well? As a matter of fact this demonstrates to us: Jesus is identified, is almost equalized with the God of Israel, whose name the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, always renders with the word "kyrios" = Lord. The Septuagint was in Paul's time and later on the "hiera grammata", the Holy Scriptures, not only of the Jewish diaspora in the Hellenistic world, but of early Christendom as well. The Trinitarian dogma had of course not yet been formulated, but Jesus, the Lord, was for St. Paul and Timothy and their Christian contemporaries the God of Israel whom they had found in the Old Testament Scriptures. "Jesus Christ, the Kyrios" became the number-one confession of the first Christians, and this confession binds together the person of the Redeemer on the one hand with his saving activity on the other, in the unity of the crucified and risen and exalted Lord; crucified, risen and exalted for us, to redeem us. Such a Christology is indispensable for the doctrine of justification. Otherwise it would become a Christology without significance for our salvation, ending up in mere speculation, while justification on the other hand without its Christo-logical basis turns out to be a

doctrine of merely “friendly acceptance”. It means to play down our human sinfulness and lull us into false sense of security, as if such acceptance had to come almost automatically.

Both, Christology and justification, belong inseparably together, just as it is reflected in Martin Luther's famous hymn which he composed in the 16th century (I quote from the older English translation. No. 656 in the Lutheran Service Book): “With might of ours can naught be done, / Soon were our loss effected; / But for us fights the valiant One / Whom God himself elected. / Ask ye, Who is this? / Jesus Christ it is, / Of Sabaoth Lord, / And there's none other God; / He holds the field forever.” (“Mit unsrer Macht ist nichts getan, / wir sind gar bald verloren, / es streit für uns der rechte Mann, / den Gott hat selbst erkoren./ Fragst du, wer der ist? / Er heißt Jesus Christ, / der Herr Zebaoth, / und ist kein andrer Gott, / das Feld muss er behalten”).

Speaking in his name, as his ambassador and apostle, St. Paul speaks no empty words. Along with his words and through them comes “Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus, our Lord” (1:3) to Timothy and all who with him hear the words of this letter. This is no profane language. It is liturgical language, having its place in the divine service, where the partakers of the Lord's Supper once greeted each other with the “holy kiss” of peace (Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; II Cor. 13:12; I Thess. 5:26), the kiss of love (I Peter 5:14), and where “grace” and “peace” were handed out in the sacred meal of our Lord's Body and Blood. In Didache X:6, one of the earliest liturgies of the Sacrament of the Altar, grace and peace, for instance, are declared to be the gifts coming to the recipient by means of Christ's Body and Blood. This, by the way, is a hint to the context into which this letter of St. Paul (and other apostolic letters in the New Testament as well) do belong and where they have been read and heard. We have to be aware of this context. Remember: In those times by far not everybody was able to read and write, in particular among the Greek population of the lower social level, as were to be found in early Christian congregations (it was different, though, with the Jewish male population; they had learned and “known the Holy Scriptures from childhood” 3:15, as Timothy had). Therefore the worship service became the most important place where the apostolic message was proclaimed and could be heard – and where it in the end “translated” into action.

When reading this 2nd Letter to Timothy which we have before us, we have something much more than a private letter from one person to another - notwithstanding many private, personal remarks and statements directed immediately to Timothy and referring to him personally in his specific situation. We rather have to take it as a pastoral letter appealing to the whole Church and all her

members. And besides, this is a last-will-letter. St. Paul is facing martyrdom and is well aware of it. So he is passing on a heritage and a mission to Timothy.

4. The Church at Timothy's Time

Before I try to explain to you a little bit who this Timothy was to whom St. Paul sent this letter as its first reader, let me make a few remarks about the situation of the Church at the time when this letter was written.

It was most likely in the years 63 or 64 after Christ when Paul wrote it. The Christian faith had already found followers all around the Mediterranean Sea, and the Church had spread out into all countries east and west: Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, the Balkans, Italy, Egypt, and most likely also to what today is Southern France and perhaps even Spain. It all happened in an almost incredibly short time and, last not least, because there existed a common language, a “lingua franca”, namely the Greek, in common use from Persia to Spain, all over the Roman Empire, a language by which Christians could communicate easily in all these places. Not to speak of the travel conditions at that time – you could go everywhere in the Roman Empire without visa, immigration regulations and the like. However, Christians were still a very small minority of the population in pluralistic religious surroundings. The Church was far from being consolidated and firm. Instead, the Church was threatened from the outside by persecutions (mainly because Christians refused to take part in the cult of the Emperor), had to suffer such persecutions, but were able to overcome them. And threatened from the inside by heresy (for instance the rising movement of the so-called “gnosis” -- i.e. “knowledge” about which I will say a few words later, but also from different forms of syncretism), and, last not least, by ethical, moral weakness creeping into the Christian community here and there.

Some of the first Apostles were still alive – though not all of them. Some had already lost their lives, for instance St. James. To suffer, to be martyred was not merely an unlikely possibility far from the Christians' mind; instead it was a brutal reality Christians had to face every day. So it is with St. Paul in our case. He is still alive, but in prison and preparing himself for the day on which he will have to die for his Lord. At the moment when he wrote his letter he is still the teacher with apostolic authority, and for Timothy he is an instance to appeal to, a source of orthodoxy, of correct and valid doctrine, appointed to “produce” sound doctrine, to defend it, to safeguard it, to pass it on to his successors. Remember: this is not yet the time when the New Testament in all its parts had been written down and disseminated everywhere and recognized as the true, valid, and reliable source of Christian

doctrine. Instead, you had the still living guarantors of orthodoxy, namely the apostles, who were called to speak on behalf and in the name of their Lord. Their letters and the Gospel in its written form gradually began to replace the living sources of doctrine, becoming finally the “Binding Summary, Basis, Rule, and Guiding Principle” of all teaching in the church (to quote the Formula of Concord of 1577/1580), along with the already existing Bible, namely the books of the Old Testament. It was quite a remarkable step in the early church, this transition from the living to the written source of doctrine, from the Gospel message proclaimed by authorized messengers to the Gospel message preached on the basis of a written deposit, a tradition so-to-say, “paradosis” or “paratheke” in the Greek (cf. II Thess. 2:15; 3:6; I Tim 6:20). They had a “good deposit”, indeed.

With the 2nd Letter to Timothy which we have before us, we are right in the middle of this process of transition from the oral to the written message. Furthermore: The authority to teach, to defend and proclaim Christian doctrine is passing over from “charismatically” gifted, prophetic individuals to office-holders formally “called and ordained” (to use our traditional terminology) to perform their ministry. Formal structures emerge in the Churches' organization, to secure mission work and stabilization. And this process of transition does not mean to dissolve or renounce what was in the beginning, nor to establish a hardening, fossilized, immovable organization far from the Spirit's influence. It's just the other way around: under the Spirit's guidance the Church is getting the necessary equipment to endure and fulfill her mission.

Liberal theologians (and some conservatives as well) in the 19th and 20th century (and even nowadays) criticized this development in the early church as false and incorrect, as a total break with what had existed in the beginnings and characterized it. Establishing formal structures, offices, ministries with clearly outlined functions was judged as being incompatible with what Jesus and the apostles had originally intended. What a misunderstanding this is! This so-called, seemingly “false” development protected and prevented the Church from dissolving into numerous factions, from falling apart and becoming unable to proclaim the Gospel. This development and its results were labeled by those critics as “early catholicism” (in a totally negative sense), doing (seemingly) away with Christian freedom and all presumed free activity of the Spirit. However, this opinion has turned out to be unproven and untenable. Besides this, for some people and for some time this opinion had, unfortunately, put forth the idea that the Pastoral Letters of St. Paul could never have been written by the Apostle himself nor even in his lifetime. The reason for this: “early catholicism” is clearly to be found already and precisely in these letters, namely an organized setting-up of the church being

designed and installed by appointing successors, calling and installing them. A formal organization is instituted – and in the end all of this helped the Church decisively to overcome persecution and sectarianism. Those who blame this development for pushing away the Spirit (which “spirit” by the way?) and paving the way to separation between clergy and laity, establishing a hierarchy and ending up in papacy - which undoubtedly is an incorrect outcome - have often ignored their own deep rooting in some kind of enthusiasm which they then try to impose onto a time and situation which was actually quite different. There is hardly any evidence for such a break from the Spirit's free activity to a formal establishment of an institution that eliminate an apparent former freedom. Newest modern research has to some extent dissociated from this idea of a break between an early period of the Spirit's free activity and later “early catholicism”. And consequently the conviction that the Pastoral Letters may well have had St. Paul as their author is getting more consent and approval nowadays. It is true: the language in these letters, the vocabulary Paul is using to address Timothy, is obviously different from earlier letters. The situation of the congregations has changed. But this cannot be proof of any imitation or falsification. Facing new problems (as was the case for Paul and Timothy) will lead to a change of language. And the very intimate remarks concerning Timothy, the very lively description of Paul's relationship to Timothy, speak clearly in favor of authenticity. On the other hand there can be no doubt about the fact that a new situation had developed, quite different from what Christianity had to go through in its very beginnings after Pentecost.

5. St. Paul's Imprisonment

I mentioned already that the Christian congregations by that time were threatened from the outside and from the inside; from the outside by growing oppression and persecution; from the inside by heresy and false teaching. St. Paul, writing his Pastoral Letters, in particular the 2nd Letter to Timothy, was facing his execution, a martyr's death. It is true that we have no information in the New Testament itself about what happened to him after he had come to Rome. It seems that he – after having been arrested in Jerusalem and shipped to Rome according to St. Luke's report in Acts, chapters 21 to 28 – had been released from prison for a certain period and later on arrested again. This is not recorded in the New Testament, but you can infer it from Paul's writings. We also don't know for sure where nor why and how long he was in prison for a second time – most likely, though, in Rome again (cf. 1:17). It is just the fact that Paul speaks of himself as a “prisoner” (1:8), of “sufferings for the Gospel”, of his “chain” (1:16; 2: 9), of a “first defense” in which “no one stood with” him (4:16) which provides us with some knowledge of him being in prison again. He evidently was put on trial, a second trial after the one for which he had to travel to Rome according to Acts. Moreover, documents from the end of the

1st century after Christ, namely the 1st Letter of Clemens (V:7) report that he had gone to the "far West" – which might be Spain, which he had previously expressed a desire to visit (Rom. 15:24+28).

Anyway, conditions in a prison of that time make it most likely that Paul was not able to write down any letter with his own hands being in chains, at least not letters like the pastoral ones. After all it would have taken not only hours, but days to write them on parchment, not to speak of lacking ink and parchment in prison. Therefore it might well be the case that some "secretary" did the work of writing under supervision and direction of the Apostle and on behalf of him and in his name – this was quite common in the ancient world. Nevertheless, these Pastoral Letters deliver the Apostle's authentic voice and view. This is different from the position taken by higher criticism, declaring only seven out of 13 letters of St. Paul to be authentic. I can in no way agree with this assumption.

6. Timothy - the Addressee

We now come to Timothy, the addressee of this letter, with whom St. Paul had a very close personal relationship. Who was this man, bearing a Greek name? We learn from the Book of Acts that he was the son of a Jewish mother and a Greek, i.e. a pagan father. Paul met him in Lystra in Asia Minor (Turkey today) on his first missionary journey. To be born of a Jewish mother made Timothy a Jew himself (it's always the mother who determines the status of being a Jew). But for some reason (which we don't know) Timothy had not been circumcised so far. Perhaps his mother and grandmother had already converted to Christianity when he was born and therefore left him uncircumcised. In the end it was St. Paul who performed the rite of circumcision for Timothy "because of the Jews who were in that region" (Acts 16:3) and because he "wanted to have him go with him". Far more important is the fact that Timothy was of "genuine faith...which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice" (1:5), and that he "learned" and knew the Holy Scriptures "from childhood" (4:15). "The Holy Scripture", referring to the Old Testament books, Timothy had learned them like any other Jewish boy, but he had learned to find Christ in them, and that makes the difference. It came from his mother and grandmother. The Apostle ordained him, placed him into the ministry, being convinced that Timothy was firm enough in his faith and fit for the mission work. We'll hear of his ordination later.

Timothy became a disciple, an assistant to Paul. He learned from him, helped in the mission work, is called an "evangelist", is involved in composing several apostolic letters (namely I and II Thessalonians, II Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, in which he is mentioned), had a leading position in the church in Asia Minor and, according to early tradition, was the first bishop of

the church in Ephesus. St. Paul addresses him as “beloved son” (II Tim 1:2) and “a true son in the faith” (I Tim 1:2). And now he asks him “to come quickly” (4:9) and to do his “utmost to come before winter”. That means a lot, as I will explain later on. It certainly was not at all a pleasure-trip to which Paul called him.

Why was this invitation articulated so urgently? From the middle of November until the middle of March it was hardly possible to sail across the Mediterranean Sea because of weather conditions: “mare clausum”, closed sea, they called this period. Safe (or at least somewhat “safe”) navigation was considered possible from the end of May until the middle of September, called “secure navigatio”. The appeal “to come before winter” not only reflects Paul's anxiety not to bring Timothy into any unnecessary danger by untimely seafaring, but also enables us to date Paul's letter: it might have been written in the fall of the year 63 after Christ, before the sea was “closed”.

7. Timothy's Ordination

What constitutes Timothy's ministry is not the personal relationship to St. Paul, not the close bond between these two men, not because he could call him “beloved son” or “true son”. According to II Tim. 1:6 it is “the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands”. This gift (in Greek: charisma) is in itself mediated grace, given to fulfill a specific task. Timothy is inserted into that “chain”, that sequence, that succession of servants to God, ambassadors of Christ, which has its origin in God sending his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. The gift Paul is referring to has passed on from Christ to the apostles, and from them to servants like Timothy. All of this happens according to Christ's own words in John 20:21 “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you”; “receive the Holy Spirit”. This sending, this commissioning goes on and on, but it is always centered in Christ who is still sending and giving the Spirit himself, authorizing his messenger to speak and act in his name.

We hear of Timothy's ordination already in the 1st Letter to Timothy (4:14). There St. Paul exhorts his disciple “not [to] neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with laying on of hands of the eldership”. Is there a contradiction between I and II Tim. 1:6, where it says “through the laying on of my [i.e. the Apostle's] hands”? Not at all. In the first quote from I Tim. 4:14 the “eldership” (“presbyterion”) should be linked with “prophecy”. Mentioning the “eldership”, St. Paul is using technical language of Jewish origin. For instance, Joachim Jeremias, a highly respected German New Testament scholar, translated it this way: “Do not neglect the charisma that is in you, given on the basis (or: as a result) of prophetic words [from the eldership] when you

were ordained by laying on of hands” (so in his commentary on I Timothy: Neues Testa-ment Deutsch, vol. IV, 1971, p.29). Prophetic voices (in the church of Ephesus?) have pointed to Timothy as a qualified representative of the Apostle, and this was considered to be a “judicium Dei”, a decision of God (in other cases received by casting lots or voting). It seems that the pres-byterium, the “eldership”, assembled with the Apostle, handed to Timothy a formulated summary of the apostolic doctrine, followed by the decisive act, namely ordaining him by laying on of hands of the Apostle, perhaps along with the laying on of hands of all the members of the “presbyterium”. It all happened in one and the same act, not by different ways or in separate steps.

Nowadays in our churches in North America, Europe and elsewhere we may have different traditions of placing a qualified man into the ministry, but the most important fact is still the same: all human beings, be it an apostle or a presbyterium or a voters assembly or any other authority – they all act in behalf of and by the command of Christ himself, who uses them as his hands. It is He who ordains, it is He who lays on hands, who has in store the “good deposit” for Timothy, and it is God Himself who grants the charisma, the gift of the Spirit, to spread the message, proclaim sal-vation, and bring it to the people. This gift enables Timothy to serve in the ministry. It is a gift which is passed on from the donor to the recipient through this laying on of hands, demonstrating that it is not a new gift, different from what was handed down from Christ to the apostles and from them to their successors, and from them finally through all times from generation to generation.

According to the Pastoral Letters in the New Testament, the laying on of hands is instru-mental and not just a symbol or merely tradition. Rather it is effective, giving a charisma, a gift of the Spirit once for ever. The laying on of hands, however, can and should never be looked upon as isolated from the “paratheke”, the “good deposit” of sound, biblical, apostolic doctrine. There is no succession in the apostolic ministry based only on a rite, a ceremony to be performed; but it is always linked with apostolic doctrine, with the “good deposit”. The gift having been handed down and received, in fact is now and will now remain in and with the recipient; he therefore is now a permanent bearer of this charisma and thereby different from other members of the congregation. Different does not mean: of better or higher level, nearer to God or whatever. This gift can and may be neglected and weakened in its effectiveness. It therefore needs to be stirred up – in power, in love, in a sound mind, for that is characteristic of the Spirit God is giving. The recipient should be enabled to confess, to show love, to give an example of complete self-sacrifice. For Timothy, in the given situation, self-sacrifice is to be taken rather literally: Paul asks Timothy to come to him who is in prison (most likely in Rome), and he knows what he has to expect: Timothy is, in fact, sup-posed to be ready to die, to be a martyr, just like

Paul. But you have to take into account: Paul sees himself not as a prisoner of the Roman emperor or of any other human authority; he is a prisoner of Christ, his Redeemer – and that makes a great difference.

To be called and ordained to the ministry does not always and for everyone mean to be appointed or be determined to sacrifice one's life and become a martyr in the specific sense of that word. It was true for Timothy, but it is not to be applied in general to every servant of Christ. Only God knows whom He appoints to offer his life; only He can decide; only He has that in His hands. It's a great difference whether we seek to become martyrs or whether we are ready to accept it when it comes upon us. The latter is what we should be ready for, the former is simply forbidden.

8. Theology of Martyrdom

In the 2nd Letter to Timothy St. Paul explains all he wants to tell him in two main parts. Part One, from the very beginning down to chapter 2:13, can rightly be called a “theology of martyr-dom”, while Part Two, starting from chapter 2:14 and going to 4:5, is dealing with the “good fight of faith”.

In Part One the Apostle admonishes Timothy (and us) and appeals to him to give a fearless testimony of the faith which is in him and to enter into the fellowship of suffering – suffering with Christ and with the Apostle. Suffering with Christ – that gives him the conviction that after and through the cross there will finally come the glory of the resurrection. Suffering and death will never be the last, the final, the ultimate. Therefore he is not ashamed and can ask Timothy not to be ashamed, but that he be ready to share sufferings; not to turn away, but to be strong. All this is language of the theology of martyrdom, just as “to be poured out”, “delivered from evil work“ or being “preserved”. In the first part of his letter, St. Paul focusses on Christ's and his own sufferings and the ones of Timothy which are still to come. His appeal not to turn away is based on this un-shakeable conviction which he has himself and which he has passed on to Timothy, that he has not a “spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (1:7) – all this has to be proven and tested and preserved and activated in the moment of suffering or even death. But it's there! This spirit is in him! “Power” (dynamis), “love” (agape), sound mind (sophronismos/sophrosyne) en-ables them to transcend human capacities, to endure more than what normally could be endured by natural strength and power. It is a spirit not only given to martyrs but to everyone called and ordain-ed to serve Christ in the holy ministry; a spirit also offered to every Christian. Martyrdom is not a precondition for getting this spirit. Instead, God is giving it freely to the elect, whoever and where-ever they are.

Paul's firm conviction that he is fully saved by Jesus Christ, whom he confesses as “raised from the dead”, makes him strong enough “to endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also [i.e. besides me, I am sure they have it] may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus...” (2:8.10). He quotes “a faithful saying: For if we die with Him, we shall also live with Him”. At the end of this quote (2:13) we read: “If we are faithless, He remains faithful”. This marks a break in thought, logic, and construction. Logic would say: He will be faithless as well, unfaithful. But Paul can never say so. Instead he proclaims the wonderful: “He remains faithful. He cannot deny Him-self”. What a promise! What an invitation! It reminds us of what St. Paul had already written to the Romans (3:3): “For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not!”. Paul's theology of martyrdom has a firm christological basis. Be-cause Christ has overcome sufferings and death, so will His servants.

9. The Good Fight of Faith

In chapter 2:14 we find a completely new start with the idea of the “good fight of faith”, a train of thought the Apostle follows down to chapter 4:5, before he addresses his own situation at the very end of his letter (4:6-20). This entire Second Part is very similar to what you can find already in I Timothy. Some theologians in our day have suggested that this second part could have been a separate letter for itself, only later on included at this point to make up one letter. Since they found it to be so different from Part One of II Timothy, they searched for reasons for this diversity. Two different letters melted down to one? This assumption creates more problems in the end than it pretends to solve. Forget it, it has no serious support.

The “good fight of faith”, the predominant subject of the First Part, is directed not so much against the Old Adam at first, which every Christian has to fight. It is not primarily a matter of self-control, self-denial, coming under the rubric of “sanctification”. Instead, it is principally directed against false doctrine and false teachers that undermine the “good deposit” and replace it by man-made theories. To cope with this danger, according to St. Paul, is “orthotomein” (2:15), i.e. “rightly dividing the word of truth”, instead of “logomachein” (2:14), i.e. “to strive about words”. Paul is firmly convinced that “the solid foundation of God stands”. So he is not afraid of losing the fight of faith to the opponents, in spite of their attempts “to overthrow the faith of some” (2:18) and the fact that “their message will spread like cancer” (2:27). It is amazing how sure, how convinced St. Paul is in this matter. “Perilous times will come” (3:1), but they cannot stop the “heavenly kingdom” to come, for

which the elect will be preserved.

“In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour, but also some for dishonour”, says St. Paul (2:20). He speaks of a “great house”, using this metaphor to describe the empirical Church on earth without palliating or extenuating. It's the Church to which we belong and which we serve. Not a Church triumphant – this one we have to wait for until the Day of Judgement when this world will pass away. Instead, it's a Church under the cross, hidden with respect to holiness and beauty, a Church militant having to fight the devil with the “good fight of faith”. There will always be error, sin, heresy. No perfect Church, but a Church able to turn over the “vessel of dishonour” into one of honour – by repentance. The ideal state of affairs will never come to this Church on earth. The concept of bringing about her holiness in a visible form, as the Donatists (a few centuries later) had developed, to create a perfect Church, was rejected in the course of history, correctly rejected, though it came up again from time to time. And to separate those going astray, to exclude them from the Church, will have to stay within certain limits. You can never create a completely “pure” Church. Suspension from the sacraments, from membership, should only be understood as an expression of care, intended to help someone to repent, to turn away from sin and error, as a saving effort “in humility correcting those who are in opposition” (2:25).

So much as an introduction to this 2nd Letter to Timothy.

II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CHRIST'S SERVANT?

If we would have to give a title to St. Paul's 2nd Letter to Timothy, I think it couldn't be anything else than “What Does it Mean to be Christ's Servant?” Serving Christ – that's indeed what Paul is talking about with respect to Timothy and in regard to his own person, and finally about us who are reading this letter today. Instead of systematizing all the different aspects we find in this letter to Timothy (which is in fact a mixture of admonitions, advices, statements, and prophecy), I would like to draw your attention to four questions we may ask:

1. What is “Serving Christ” all about?
2. What upholds the Servant?
3. What challenges the Servant?
4. What is demanded of a Servant?

The final part of my presentation will then draw some conclusions: What does 2nd Timothy teach us

today and how can we serve Christ in our ministry?

1. What is “Serving Christ” all about?

Timothy is reminded that he has to keep “that holy thing which was committed to you...by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us” (1:14). In the original Greek this “holy thing” is called “paratheke”, the good deposit, and the same expression is found in I Tim. 6:20: “Guard what was committed to your trust “, guard the “paratheke”, the deposit. In Paul's view this is the foremost obligation of Christ's servant. The Apostle is concerned to consolidate the basis on which the church is established in view of so much false doctrine and error that has come up. And this basis is no-thing but the Gospel, the “testimony of our Lord” (1:8). Paul speaks of it as a precious treasure, entrusted to him and passed over to Timothy. He accepts it as a clearly formulated doctrine, “to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the gentiles” (1:11). It is a “para-theke” which he, the Apostle, “committed to Him [the Lord] until that day” (1:12). This is a some-what unexpected way to translate the Greek, which actually says: God will watch over (phylaxai) “my paratheke”, so that it will be preserved, will do its work, will come to its final goal, namely to save sinners - “until that day” , which is of course the Day of Final Judgement. This day Paul expects to come soon as he himself faces the judgement which will terminate his life in this world, i.e. martyrdom.

We are perhaps not used to identify the Gospel message as a “deposit”, as a clearly formulated doctrine, as a “holy thing” committed to us. Doctrine seems to us being a dry, impractical, lifeless kind of thing. It may be treated by professors and students of theology, but remains far from being attractive. At least for German ears “doctrine” sounds like that – perhaps it might be different for English speaking people. Anyway, we are altogether pretty far from the language of the 16th century and our confessions, speaking frequently of “doctrina evangelii”, “doctrine of the Gospel” without the slightest negative touch in it. And now, let us take a look into chapter 1, verses 9+10. They contain the fundamental truth which the Apostle was preaching, the cardinal points of his theology: “God...has saved us and called us...not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus...our Saviour...who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel...”. These sentences come most likely from liturgical usage and formulate a confession of faith – perhaps it belonged to a baptismal hymn which Paul took up. And they are far from being lifeless or impractical; instead it's just pure Gospel: God (and He alone) “has saved us, called us... not our works...His grace ...given to us in Christ...abolished death...brought life”: all these

words are Gospel, pure Gospel indeed. Praising God for His saving activity, Paul gives a christological testimony: only in Christ we have this saving grace, the divine call to overcome death and find life eternal. This confession reflects and contains Paul's position concerning justification and sanctification, Law and Gospel, namely, that all depends on Christ. It's altogether and exclusively God's saving activity, and there is nothing we have or need to contribute by our activity. But once we are justified in God's sight, we are called to live accordingly, to live a sanctified life, being equipped and strengthened to do so.

Jesus is our Savior, “Soter” in the Greek. In the Hellenistic world you could find this term “soter”, saviour attached to many gods and idols: Asklepios, Sarapis, Isis and other deities, and last not least the Emperor himself. With St. Paul you'll find it transferred to Jesus, the heavenly King and Redeemer, as the only Saviour. That implies a total renunciation of any salvation or redemption from human, secular, or pagan sources.

Paul was made “a preacher, an apostle, a teacher” of exactly this Gospel (1:11), and Timothy likewise. He is called upon to confess this Gospel (1:8), not to “be ashamed” of it, and to commit “the things that you have heard of me...to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2:2).

To guard the “good deposit” has a twofold meaning: one is to accept it as a norm, a tradition handed down to Timothy in precisely the words which he had “heard from me [St. Paul] among many witnesses” (2:2); second is to confess this truth, this doctrine in the given situation in which Timothy finds himself now. Actual confessing should never be played off against acceptance of a normative “stock” of doctrine. Actual confessing needs to speak out clearly what the content of the confession is. There exists a modern tendency (at least in Europe) to regard confessions as only an answer, a statement addressing contemporary problems in church and society. Doctrine, written confessions of old (like the ones in the Book of Concord), any formulated doctrinal statements are regarded to be nothing more than expressions of faith, of human origin, man-made, reflecting the degree to which human understanding could probably come at best. They are considered to be historically and socio-culturally conditioned, therefore not binding, but open to revision, to re-adjustment, to change. What really counts in this concept is individual faith, faith in my heart, “fides qua creditur” instead of “fides quae creditur” (to put it into Latin), a trusting faith, not a faith sticking to explicitly articulated doctrines. There is some truth in this idea, undoubtedly. It is true in so far as only a faith that trusts in Christ and His redemption can save me (“fides” = “fiducia”), not a mere assent to facts. But faith needs

facts to rely on. Furthermore, to devalue the formulated confession makes faith in the end a mere feeling of being somehow accepted, not resting upon God's revealed truth, but turning into mere emotion, fading away in times of temptation and trouble. This understanding seems to become predominant in our days, at least in Europe.

Differing from the Lutheran Church, Calvinists have always accentuated this actual, momentary act of confessing, neglecting to some extent the binding obligation of written and church-wide accepted confessions. Therefore they have been much more productive than the Lutherans. A collection of Reformed confessions, recently published in Germany, listed more than 180 of them! But all these confessional writings, symbols, statements, are largely of only limited validity, and only in as much as they were considered to be in accordance with the Scriptures (“quatenus” = in so far as). But taking this “quatenus”, “in as far as” strictly, could one not easily subscribe even to the decisions of the Council of Trent or any similar document? And liberal theologians, of course, could easily subscribe to the Lutheran confessions “as far as”. For Reformed understanding these confessions are always statements addressing a specific situation; they are historically conditioned and cannot be binding and be valid everywhere for everybody and at any time, as the Lutheran Confessions claim. The validity of Reformed confessions was and still is limited to a certain period, a certain area, a certain situation. They can be replaced by new confessions any time. No wonder, if under such influence the accent is put more and more on the individual's faith alone, not confessing the confessions previously formulated by the generations before us.

Lutherans, on the other hand, accept their confessions not with that kind of reservation, but “because” (“quia”) we take them to be in full accordance with the Sacred Scriptures and consequently establishing a norm and standard for preaching and teaching, for all doctrine. However, the Scriptures themselves always remain the highest norm to which confessions are subject and exposed as their decisive and controlling criterion. But they open our minds and hearts to what the Scriptures tell us, and safeguard the Gospel from being distorted.

“The good thing”, the “good deposit”, “the testimony of our Lord”, the “paratheke” mentioned in II Timothy always appears in view and in the presence of error, false doctrine, false teaching – just as in later times the christological and trinitarian dogma of the Ancient Church and the Confessions of the 16th century originated from confrontation with doctrines deviating from the Scriptures. The Church had to give an answer to doctrines set forth contrary to the Scriptures. And we cannot step behind such

answers without denying the faith of our fathers, of generations before us. There is no confession without rejection of the wrong, the dangerous, the misleading. And the Church has done so, has confessed the truth and thereby developed step by step the “good deposit” which we have overcome. St. Paul was confronted with the heresy and heterodoxy of his time, and so was Timothy. The greatest danger in their times came from Judaistic legalism (as we can learn from the Letter to the Galatians) and from an arising “Gnosis”, the latter a movement not yet fully developed at St. Paul’s time and therefore somewhat difficult to grasp and to describe, but obviously a great danger to the Christians. We’ll come to that a bit later.

We should carefully pay attention to the fact that ethical instruction is an integral part of Christian doctrine. The 2nd Letter to Timothy gives evidence of that. You cannot split up Christian doctrine into dogmatics on the one hand and ethics on the other; you can distinguish them, but not separate and deal with either one apart from the other. To guard the good deposit means not only to preach and teach it, but also to live up to it. How can a pastor preach the Law without exposing himself to it? How can he preach forgiveness without longing for it himself? It is true (and it was so already in Paul’s and Timothy’s time) that we are an “epistle...known and read by all men”, as St. Paul writes in II Corinthians 3:2f, “an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God”, or – as someone said in our times – you are the only Bible still read by the majority in our present day society. That puts a great responsibility upon the servants of Christ.

To “guard the good deposit” does not mean to put this treasure, this “paratheke” into a closet, to close the door, and think that you might own it now and for ever. Instead, it calls for the servant’s activity. St. Paul reminds his “beloved son” that he “was appointed [to the Gospel] a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the gentiles”, in which ministry Timothy is supposed to be his successor. He shall therefore commit, pass on what he has heard from Paul “to faithful men...able to teach others also” (2:2). He shall present himself to be “a worker (!) ...rightly dividing the word of truth” (2:15). The Apostle implores his disciple insistently and imperatively: “I charge you...before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who will judge the living and the dead: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (4:1+2). “Do the work of an evangelist” (4:5). That’s mission work, bringing Christ to those who neither know him nor His salvation, in the horizon of the great judgement which is to come.

Serving Christ is of course a bit more than just preaching the word (which, of course, always

includes all the means of grace, namely the sacraments as well). It means caring for the people, realizing their needs, material as well as spiritual. It includes guidance and leadership from the shepherd of Christ's flock. The different Greek words used by Paul to describe the "work of an evangelist" give us an idea: "keryssein", "didaskhein", "elengchein", "epitimein", "parakalein" each illumine a special aspect of the work, all linked with the appeal to "be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (I Tim. 4:12). For otherwise we can make the word ineffective and the good deposit will fail to work and achieve what it is given for. St. Paul had written to Timothy before: "If a man desires the position of a bishop [which means: leadership in the church], he desires a good work" (I Tim. 3:1). This is not to be understood in terms of material advantages, profit, easy life, good conditions. There is no doubt: Timothy is determined to suffer, perhaps to die. Nevertheless it's a "good work", a "kalon ergon", because it's a holy assignment, a holy mission, doing and mediating Christ's saving work to those who need salvation. When His servants do what they are appointed to do, "they represent the person of Christ on account of the call of the church and do not represent their own persons...when they offer the word of Christ or the sacraments, they offer them in the stead and place of Christ. The words of Christ teach us this, so that we are not offended by the unworthiness of ministers". So says the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Art. VII and VIII, § 28 (Kolb-Wengert, p. 178). The ministers become a tool in Christ's hands that makes their work a good, a holy work.

2. What upholds the Servant?

What keeps him steadfast and firm? If we follow St. Paul's way of thought, we'll notice that he never sees himself or Timothy left alone, be on his own, lonely, isolated. In spite of all who have abandoned the Apostle in his prison, as Demas, Crescens, Titus, Tychicus – their names are listed (4:9ff) -, he himself never felt that way. On the contrary: Christ always with him, carrying the burden with him, sharing Paul's captivity. In fact: the Apostle regards himself not to be the Emperor's prisoner, but Christ's. When and where Paul is in prison, so is also his Master, his Lord. Or better the other way around: where Christ is bearing the cross, nailed to the cross, there his servants have to be. St. Paul tries to give the same confidence and certainty to Timothy: you are never on your own. You are always in your Master's hands. He has called me, St. Paul. He has called you. And Paul takes this foundation of his confidence very serious, very realistic. His confidence is not a mere feeling, not a conviction emerging from his own heart and mind. It's rather based on facts which you can find in his own biography, as well as in Timothy's. God, says Paul, "has saved us and called us with a holy calling...I was appointed [note: it's the passiv form, indicating by God and by Christ] a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher..." "You [Timothy] must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of,

knowing from whom [that's St. Paul] you have learned them”.

The facts are the following: Timothy has been baptized (though not explicitly mentioned in the New Testament), has been raised in the Christian faith by his mother and grandmother (they are therefore mentioned 1:5), elected, instructed by Paul, ordained to the ministry, gifted with the special “charisma”. And remember: holy ordination is not just a mere gesture to underline an administrative act, but it is a medium to pass on the power of the Spirit, to enable, to authorize, to strengthen the ordinand, if necessary to strengthen him even for martyrdom. This divine authority and strength, transferred by prayer and laying on of hands, can in no way be replaced by a mere mandate, an order of any ecclesiastical authority, board, administrator or office-holder. If they are involved it is as instruments of Christ. However, this charisma, once conferred upon the recipient, needs to be stirred up, awakened. It resembles a smoldering spark which needs to be inflamed, to burst into flame. But it always remains a gift from outside, not originating from us, a “donum alienum”, an alien gift. And as a minister is in constant danger of becoming discouraged and timid because of his human weakness, this gift can make him intrepid and confident, assuring him of the very fact that God had appointed him and Christ had called him into the ministry. Therefore St. Paul reminds Timothy to pay attention to what God has done to him and given to him: detect it, inflame it, make use of it – it's there, it's in you, it's yours! You are rooted in Christ, you are gifted with His Spirit, you are not left alone.

And as you are gifted with His Spirit and protected by Him, you are made strong even to face martyrdom if God wants you to suffer it. In 1:8 and 2:3 the Apostle calls on Timothy, “share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God”, and “you must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”. In both cases he uses the Greek word “synkako-patheson” – suffer with, endure with - with whom?

With the Gospel, with Christ – and with the Apostle, who frequently speaks of “kakopatho” (= I suffer). In fact: this suffering “with” Christ, the Gospel (which also means: with Christ) actually, in Paul's situation, means to be ready for martyrdom, ready to lose life and limb – and that's what he expects not only of himself, but of Timothy as well – in any case being firmly grounded on the “Holy Spirit who dwells in us” (1:14), in other words: on the indissoluble connection with Christ, established in holy baptism and through the Lord's Body and Blood given and shed in the Holy Supper. For this connection guarantees life with Christ.

“For if we died with Him, / we shall also live with Him [in and by holy baptism].

If we endure [sufferings and persecution], / we shall also reign with Him.

“If we deny Him [when becoming weak], / He also will deny us.

If we are faithless [i.e. without faith and disloyal as well] / He remains faithful;

He cannot deny Himself” (2:11-13),

Paul is here quoting a hymn – by its language it refers to the theology of baptism and the Lord's Supper; it unfolds Paul's statement in Roman 6:8: “If we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him”. What is true for baptism with water, is more than ever true for a martyr's baptism with blood: he enters into life with Christ, in His kingdom. “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him” - this reminds us of Luke 22:28f “You are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom...”, This is a statement in the context of the institution of the Lord's Supper.

Going through the verses of the hymn I just quoted, we notice that the last verse takes an unexpected turn: though God will deny those who have denied Him (cf. Matth. 10:33), He will meet our faithlessness – not with giving us up! Instead, He remains faithful Himself – different from what we might expect – for He cannot deny Himself, cannot contradict Himself. What a comfort lies in these words, in this promise of God's faithfulness. His mercy is always greater than our infidelity. God's kingdom will come to perfection in spite of the weakness of the believers, of the baptized and those who have partaken in the Lord's Supper, just as Christ did not give up St. Peter denying Him in the night in which He was betrayed. Rather He prayed for him that his “faith should not fail” (Luke 22:32). Timothy may become weak and may fail when put to the test in martyrdom, just like Peter became weak, but Christ will win anyway, He remains “pistos” (faithful).

St. Paul trusts so firmly in the presence and help of Christ, so confidently in His calling (“He called us with a holy calling”, “klesis hagia” 1:9) that he dares to ask, to implore, almost to command Timothy to come to him, the prisoner – without having anything to promise but the same destination he faces himself, namely martyrdom. Imagine: would we ever dare to ask anyone to expose himself to such a risk, such a danger? Most likely not. St. Paul does so. He is absolutely convinced that losing life and limb for Christ is to gain “the crown of righteousness (laid up for him), which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (4:8).

That's what upholds a servant, and that's what St. Paul therefore enjoins on Timothy, namely: “Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my Gospel,

for which I suffer as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained” (2: 8f.). “Raised from the dead” assures us that the fight we have to go through is already won, the victory is Christ's and therefore ours. This should preserve us from fear, from false rash-ness, passion, and fanaticism. No human power can ever gag or silence the word of God nor deprive it of its efficiency. Having this in mind we can stay rather calm, not getting excited, but wait for the final outcome.

3. What challenges the Servant?

It is a twofold challenge Timothy is confronted with – and we may ask if this applies to us as well. First it's his own weakness, facing failure, lack of success, crisis, persecution, suffering. And secondly it's the weakness around him, which will never let us find the church and our congregations in perfect condition.

Paul and Timothy had some more problems in addition to the so far mentioned. There was a sectarian movement called “gnosis”, which threatened the Church at that time, destroying Christian faith and true doctrine. This phenomenon in the ancient world is not easy to grasp, because it appears in great variety, in many different forms and shapes. In general it applies to “certain heretical sects among the early Christians who claimed to have superior knowledge of spiritual things, and interpreted the sacred writings by a mystic philosophy” (Oxford Universal Dictionary Vol. I, 1969, p. 805). Its pretended esoteric spiritual knowledge, reserved to an elite, made it attractive to people longing for deliverance from this world. Creation in the understanding of the “gnosis” is no longer God's good creation. Rather this world is evil into which human beings are plunged. The human soul, however, can climb up again to the heavenly sphere by help of a redeemer, leaving the world behind. This idea could easily go along with an ethical libertinism should the occasion arise, fully neglecting God's commandments. The reason for it: the soul is considered pure in itself, has fallen down from the heavenly sphere into a kind of imprisonment in the body; and the body is regarded as evil in substance, being part of this evil world. Note: body and soul are strictly separated and opposed to each other, not of one and the same creation, so to say. Neglecting the body as something negative can result in either ethical libertinism (it doesn't matter what I do with my body, how I behave, the body is going to be destroyed anyway) or – just the opposite - in ascetic rigorism (the body has to be fought, to be suppressed, crushed down). Based on mythological speculations, not too far from modern occultism, this “gnosis” appeared everywhere in the Hellenistic world. It accepted and mixed ideas from Persia, Babylon, Egypt, the Old Testament and Greek philosophy. We need not and cannot go into more details at this point, not knowing in detail what the “gnosis” (to which St. Paul is referring) looked like. There

is no detailed information about gnostic teaching and its content in the Pastoral Letters. St. Paul simply refers to this phenomenon in I Tim. 6:20, calling his disciple to avoid “the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge” (“pseudonymou gnoseos”), “by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith”, he states. There can be no doubt that this “pseudonymous knowledge” was in the minds of those false teachers St. Paul mentions several times (4:3; 2:17f; 3:7ff). In addition, Paul and Timothy find themselves confronted not only with such false doctrine and false teachers spreading heresy; but also face outspoken enemies both outside the church and inside. And they also have to deal with all kinds of ethical misbehaviour, offenses (to express it somewhat politely) going hand in hand with false beliefs inside the Christian community of that day. You could say: what a miserable situation, what a bunch of problems, what a burden almost impossible to carry. In such a situation we are called to fight and not to give up. Paul uses the picture of warfare (2:4), of a soldier (2:3), of an athlete, of a hard working farmer (2:5+6) to describe the strain, the pressure, and stress to which a soldier of Christ is exposed. Yet Paul continues to be clear-headed about the fact that it is not easy to fight without achieving some visible success, without a provable guarantee, not knowing how and to what goal the Spirit is working.

We find in II Timothy a long list of all the weeds growing on the soil of the congregation, and we shouldn't be surprised that it sounds somewhat familiar to us: I think we can find them among our people, in our congregations today as well: “Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power” (3:2-5). Note: that's all happening not outside but inside the church! And it could make a servant of Christ in the end very disappointed and discouraged – as long as he doesn't realize who it is who fights with him, on his side. This degeneration of Christian doctrine and ethics, of faith and life, comes not by way of exception, nor was it happening at a time long ago, nor did it disappear gradually, nor could you expect it to disappear sooner or later. It rather reflects the status of fallen mankind altogether: that's the way we are, so prone to this disease. Timothy has to be aware of it, and has to accept it as a reality, level-headed, sober, as a matter-of-fact. Not that he should not do anything about it or simply accept it and tolerate it. But he should know that there are doctrines (and people teaching them) which cannot be healed by preaching and confessing. In such case you can only follow Paul's advice: “Shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness” (2:16). “Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife” (2:23). “From such people turn away” (3:5). “Be watchful

in all things” (4:5). You cannot expect any progress to the better, on the contrary. Don't waste your time in useless attempts to correct such people. Such people would require a complete change of life, a total conversion, otherwise there is no hope for improvement. But that does not mean we have to tolerate false doctrine and ethical deviation as such. In Paul's view they can never be tolerated. People holding to them commit a great sin, are sectarians, turn us away from God and Gospel.

St. Paul speaks to Timothy quite unemotionally when declaring “in the last days perilous times will come” (3:1). He doesn't expect a church triumphant on earth, but a Church under the cross, suffering, troubled, contested. And it's this kind of Church Timothy is to serve. But we don't hear a single word about any inefficacy or inactivity of God's Word and the Spirit. Paul knows: this Spirit will by all possible means “effect faith”, the saving faith in Christ, but “where and when it pleases God in those who hear the Gospel, that is to say in those who hear that God, not on account of our own merits but on account of Christ, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace on account of Christ” (Augsburg Confession, Art. V). For St. Paul it is absolutely natural and normal that the Church will always be covered under Christ's cross and that a servant of Christ has to stand such hardships. What he needs to learn is fully trusting in Christ and His presence, not in methods, means, and ways which we may invent in order to make His Gospel seemingly more effective.

It seems to me being one of the sicknesses of our present day world, in particular in the Western world, that we believe we might not be able to do our work and fulfill our ministry without success, without progress, without a visible, measurable increase in what we try to achieve - or at least we make ourselves believe that we cannot be without that. We sometimes talk ourselves into this kind of thinking under the influence of the secular world, the business world. Perhaps in the business world you cannot be without achieving such success and constant progress. But in the church we have no reason to feel frustrated and on the loser's side if we cannot report an increase in membership, finances, number of activities, of newly established congregations and the like. We sometimes have a hard time to accept failure, bad harvest, shrinking congregations – but why? It's not that I want to declare our own shortcomings, our laziness, our human errors, our poorness as being of no importance at all, or to find excuses for them. But we dare not and must not forget, who in the end is the winner, the victor, in whose army we fight and that we are fighting the good fight (4:7); just as Paul fought it – not looking or longing for success, acceptance, appreciation, recognition. We are freed from the stress you find in the secular world, namely to achieve constant success. We can rely on Christ and entrust our efforts to Him and His Spirit. And we have to leave it up to Him if He wants His Church to

shrink, or lose the faith, or even be destroyed and extinguished in certain parts of the world, as it has happened in the course of history, even if it is in the place where He has put us to serve Him. There will be other places where it goes the other way and other times, if our Lord wants it. It is always He and He alone who can and will decide. On the other side, if we fail, we cannot blame Him for our shortcomings, but we will have to ask ourselves if we haven't done what we were supposed to do. Remember what Martin Luther once said (with words some-what like this): if you haven't studied enough, if you haven't been working hard for your sermon, and enter the pulpit fairly unprepared, appealing to the Holy Spirit to give you the word, He will have only this one word for you: "Jack, you have been lazy".

4. What is Demanded of a Servant?

In my lectures so far I have occasionally touched upon items belonging under this headings: What is demanded from Paul, from Timothy, from us? Let us keep in mind: this is a last-will-letter, a fare-well-letter of a father (in the Spirit) to his son. It's a letter full of good counsel and necessary advice. And this counsel is scattered all over this letter.

Checking St. Pauls' vocabulary by which he is addresses Timothy, we'll find four categories of requests, charges, orders (or whatever you may call them) which he is gives, edged by a kind of frame at the beginning and at the end. He starts out with "I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you", thereby reminding Timothy of his ordination to the ministry as a source of com-fort and strength (1:6). And he ends up with the urgent call: "Be diligent to come to me quickly" (4:9), thereby expecting Timothy to join him in his sufferings, in the severest case including mar- tyrdom and death, so that he might be delivered from all evil work and preserved for Christ's heavenly kingdom (4:18), which Paul is awaiting, as is Timothy.

In between these two special requests, concerning Timothy in particular, we will find other charges or counsels, as I mentioned before. And I would like to identify four of them:

a) Number one, St. Paul reminds Timothy "not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of me" (1:6); just as Paul himself is "not ashamed" (1:12) of his sufferings nor has Onesiphorus been ashamed, while others were: "all those in Asia , among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes" (1:15). Timothy must have known them, we do not. That "all in Asia [the Roman province "Asia" is meant] turned away" from Paul does not necessarily mean that they have denied Christ and the faith

completely, but that they did not have the courage to stand by the Apostle. A certain Onesiphorus, however, did. He even traveled (most likely to Rome) to find St. Paul and to be with him. Onesiphorus is not alive any more, obviously, for the Apostle is praying “The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day” [of Judgement] (1:18). But St. Paul did not forget him and how he served.

“Not to be ashamed” is not merely a feeling of solidarity and sympathy. It rather means to be ready to suffer like Paul: “share with me in the sufferings for the gospel” (1:8); furthermore to endure hardship (2:3) and afflictions (4:5); it means to “be strong” (2:1) when it will be your turn to suffer; to fight “as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2:3). It's altogether an appeal to Timothy to join the noble company of soldiers, to stand firm and “fight the good fight of faith” (1st Tim. 6:12), of which Paul can say that he has fought it already - “I have finished the race... there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness”, righteousness which Timothy is called “to pursue” (2:22). The suffering Timothy can expect, even martyrdom, is by no means only a dark, evil fate one cannot escape – in fact: you can, if you want, as Paul indicated mentioning that “all in Asia” have turned away from him. Instead, it is “imitatio Christi”, imitation of the Christ crucified. Not that Timothy or any other servant of Christ should long for martyrdom, procure it, want it, as some enthusiasts might do. Martyrdom is something which God bestows on those He has elected for it. It comes from Him – not that we have to invite it, to provoke it, to bring it about. But we should be ready to accept it and not complain about sufferings. And we should know: we can in fact overcome it, since we are not left alone. Christ will crown all who have with St. Paul “kept the faith”.

b) In the second category of charges St. Paul speaks in terms of “to hold fast” (1:13), “to keep” (1:14), “to remember” (2:8), “to continue” (3:14), “to consider what I say” (2:7). All this is directed to guarding the good deposit entrusted to Timothy. And it concerns us as well; we have such a great heritage passed on to us: the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord, the pure doctrine, an unadulterated christology and justification, that precious “by faith, through grace, for Christ's sake alone”. It is indeed of utmost importance in view of “perilous times” and “perilous men” that are to come (3: 1ff), of which Timothy and we should be aware and not be surprised. To “continue in things which you have learned and been assured of, and knowing from whom you have learned them” (3:14) does not mean to stand still, remain stationary, unable to understand and deal with newly arising situations, unable to learn (and there is always a lot to learn, sometimes even from other Christians), but getting stuck without any growth. You can find this misunderstanding of “holding fast” and

“continuing”, this refusal of learning, quite often among Christians, even among Lutherans, who believe their conservatism to be a criterion of faithfulness. But that's not the case.

Faithfulness means to go forward, if necessary, but on the right path, guarding and keeping the good deposit, while at the same time being “ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (to quote I Peter 3:15), ready to learn and to grow in knowledge. The “good deposit” needs to be studied, be examined, be explored over and over again, and be applied. To be engaged in this study and in exploring it should be our daily business.

c) The third category of charges aims at transferring into action what Timothy had learned from the Scriptures and from him, the Apostle. To “continue in the things that you have learned” (3:14) is not enough, they need to be applied. Therefore the Apostle speaks of “remind[ing] them [the hearers] of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers” (2:14). This is applying the “good deposit” in a meaningful manner, for the sake of the elect, for their salvation. St. Paul makes it a very urgent charge “before God and the Lord Jesus Christ”: “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (4:1f). “Do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (4:5).

There is a tendency in our days (as it was already in the times of Paul and Timothy) to make the message which we have to proclaim, namely Law and Gospel, a soft message, an easy and comfortable one, “the Gospel light”. Preachers sometimes avoid talking about God's wrath and judgement and punishment in order not to offend anyone. “The time will come”, says the Apostle, “when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears... they will turn their ears away from the truth...But you be watchful...” (4:3ff). It is Timothy's, it is our responsibility not to adjust our preaching and teaching to the feelings of people, to their desires, to what they may like, what they are ready to accept or to approve of, what could make them happy. Watering down the message which is entrusted to us can never be of any help.

In the end we'll have to give account not to any human court but to Him who called us into the ministry. However, this “Preach the word, convince, rebuke, exhort” does not give us a free hand to be impractical and inflexible. We have to care for people, we have to know how much they are able to understand and how far they are able to follow us. Sometimes we have to be patient with them, to “be gentle to all, able to teach...in humility correcting those who are in opposition” (2:24f). This demands

from Christ's servants modesty and flexibility, always realizing that we are supposed to help, to assist, not to condemn or punish.

Last not least the preacher has to give an example. If doctrine and ethics, my teaching and how I live my Christian life, my preaching and my behaviour fall apart, I will become an obstacle and a hindrance to the Holy Spirit's efficiency and possibly bar His way. In the entire 2nd Letter to Timothy, Paul is always encouraging his “beloved son”. He does so by connecting the guarding of the good deposit, these charges of “hold fast”, “keep”, “continue”, not only with “preach the word” and with teaching, but also with the example Timothy is supposed to give by his life, his behaviour. To “do the work of an evangelist” (in Luther's translation into the German it reads like “do the work of a *“Prediger des Evangeliums”*”, a preacher of the Gospel) encompasses both: correct and untiring and intrepid preaching as well as giving an example of “a good soldier of Jesus Christ” in daily life. You should never have the two (namely preaching and giving an example, doctrine and ethics) separate from one other. St. Paul reminds Timothy of the example he has given (or is going to give) himself: “I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand”. He expects to be sentenced to death very soon. The language he uses is technical terminology for an offering in the realm of religion. This is now applied to a Christian's existence. He who sees himself sent into this world in order to proclaim Christ and His salvation, has to realize that he is involved in an ongoing process of breaking up his own existence, breaking with the world, to drown the old creature, the Old Adam in him, the “natural man” in us in a very realistic way, giving himself as an offering in order to be with Christ. It is with this intention that Paul expects to be “poured out” and he knows that his “departure at hand”: to be with Christ.

In this connection we might have to examine ourselves and ask: have we been truly “watchful in all things” (in the Greek it is more like “been sober, calm”)? Have we been ready to accept the sufferings God has put on us? Have we been messengers of the Gospel by word and deed? And who of our fellow Christians, entrusted to our care, has been made more confident, joyful, or at least more sober by our service? Has our life been an offering or have we rather been interested in taking it easy? What kind of fights have we been fighting – good fights or unnecessary ones, defending our own interest? Have we endured hardships? Have we “kept the faith”, guarded and preserved the “good deposit” and has our life been a testimony to Christ? And is it Christ's epiphany, the Last Day to come, to which we “look up and lift up our heads, because our redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28)? Many questions remain and they need to be asked when

we carefully read St. Paul's Letter to Timothy.

d) In the final category of charges Paul calls on Timothy personally as a Christian and responsible preacher: What to “avoid” (2:23), to “flee” (2:22), what to “turn away from” (3:5). These are certain doctrines, forms of behaviour, errors, all kinds of disobedience to God's word and will, up to “having a form of godliness but denying its power” (3:5). Some of these can still be identified today as typical for the sinful human beings, some cannot, at least not fully; for instance “profane and idle babblings” (2:16), “foolish and ignorant disputes” (2:23).

In all these cases Timothy should not think that he (out of his own strength and power) will be able to defeat the devil and put him to flight. There are situations, questions, disputes, discussions, controversies neither worth nor wise fighting, to engage in, to interfere with. St. Paul doesn't want Timothy to fail, to be on the losing side, to sin and in the end have reason to be ashamed. Therefore he, Timothy, should “be diligent to present [himself] approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2:15). He is not supposed to present himself approved by men, by any tribunal in this world. Just like St. Paul once said of himself: “With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court...He who judges me is the Lord” (I Cor. 4:3f). Timothy as a servant of Christ should always see himself in the horizon of the Last Judgement Day and do his work respectively. His ministry – just as ours – is only serving, not ruling; helping, not being helped; giving, not demanding; washing other peoples feet instead of having them serve us. But again: that doesn't mean that we have to join in every dispute, controversy, and “strive about particular words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers” (2:14). This is particularly so if we already know in advance that we will not be in the position to argue in a promising way. There are situations in which it is best simply to turn away.

At the end of his letter St. Paul urges Timothy to come to him: “Do your utmost to come before winter” (4:21). It is Paul the prisoner urging his “beloved son” to accept the same fate he is facing. What a demand! Is it not totally unreasonable? Too much to expect from Timothy? Well, we in fact don't know how Timothy responded. Did he come to see his “father in the faith” in prison, to join his sufferings? Did he return to Ephesus to be the bishop of the church there, and finally was martyred under Emperor Domitian in the years around 90 after Christ, as ancient tradition tells us? We don't know.

Anyway, all these charges we find in II Tim. leave us somewhat uncertain and with the question: How can a servant of Christ ever be a real servant and fulfill his mission? We may ask: is it not too much what Paul expects from Timothy? Are his failure, shortcomings and frustration not altogether predetermined and unavoidable? We do not know how Timothy felt after having read this letter. And there is no reason why we should know, for we should never look at any other servant of Christ in order to compare, to measure how far we came and if the other one is doing poorer or better than we do, how much we achieved, and how much he did, how great our shortcomings are and how great his. We should only look up to Christ who called, ordained, equipped and strength-ened us and is still doing so.

Timothy – if we turn once more to the beginning of St. Paul's' 2nd Letter to him – is reminded of “the genuine faith that is in you” (1:5), which means: how he is linked with Christ, connected with Him, gifted by Him and furnished with the Spirit - “a Spirit not of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (1:7). For St. Paul this gift is a reality, a fact – not a mere feeling, only a guess, a hope, a speculation. Timothy can be sure to have it. And so should we be. God has given this Spirit; there is no doubt about it. And this gift of God, His salvation, His calling, do not depend on “our works” (1:9) or on any contribution from our side. Paul finds himself - I repeat - “appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the gentiles” (1:11), and with the passive form “appointed” (“*etétheen*” in the Greek) he follows traditional Jewish usage, wanting to say “God has appointed me”, avoiding the holy name of God out of holy awe. And so Timothy is appointed likewise. Paul, always emphasizing God's activity and “the grace that is in Christ Jesus”, and the power of the Spirit, can call on Timothy on this basis – and only on this - “not to be ashamed”, to “be strong”, not measuring his own skills, abilities, fitness – which might bring him soon to despair and frustration. It is Christ on whom he shall look. And at the end of his letter St. Paul reminds Timothy of what he, Paul, had experienced: “The Lord stood with me and strengthened me...I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion” (4:17). “Lion” in this case stands as a symbol either for the devil or for death, both is possible. In any case: it's always Christ Jesus who saved him, stood with him, strengthened him and will do so in the time to come. St. Paul is absolutely certain that this has not come to an end: “And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom” (4:18). Should He, our Lord, not do the same to us, to His timid, frightened, faint-hearted and despondent servants who still have to learn not to look on ourselves but on Him to whom “be glory forever and ever” (4:18)? Leave it to Him why He elected such unworthy, unfit, and poor tools to do His work. He knows how to get this work done in spite of our imperfection and get His

kingdom to come.

This we should remember, taking note of what St. Paul is expressing so unemotionally: “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (3:12), “but you must continue in the things you have learned and been assured of” (3:14). That's our task, and it requires our faith. And faith will stand the test in the end and make us strong enough to overcome all afflictions we might be exposed to or become so in the future. Faith is something you cannot create out of your own capacities, your own will, your own efforts. It is something you have to ask for in prayer and to wait for the Spirit to grant it and to what degree. Faith is not at our disposal. It can be weak at times, almost fade away; and later it can become strong and firm again.

III. SOME OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. A Pastor is Different

It is a “pastoral letter” we have before us, a letter from a pastor to a pastor, from a shepherd of Christ's flock to another shepherd, from an Apostle to someone who will follow him. And as we are in a ministry following and derived from the one conferred upon Timothy, it is not at all a pre-sumption if we apply this letter to us and ask how we as pastors and deacons should fulfill our respective ministry in the light of what St. Paul has written to Timothy.

I will try to offer some observations referring to this matter and give you some suggestions concerning our ministry, how to manage our “manner of life” (as Paul calls it, 3:10) and how to live up to our calling.

Pastors (i.e. shepherds) do not only have to care for others, for their family, for fellow Christians and members of their congregation. But their activity also has to be directed to them-selves, caring for their own soul and learning how to “fight the good fight of faith” (1st Tim. 6:12), a fight we cannot escape and should not try to escape. But it is not only fighting, it is also “drawing water from the wells of salvation”(Isaiah 12:3), which brings us to “the joy of the Lord”, which is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). How could we otherwise be “fellow workers for your joy” (II Cor. 1:24), if we do not find any joy ourselves in the ministry we have? Pastors also have to be concern-ed for their own sanctification, of which the final result will be a real “saint” in God's view whose life reveals the impact of Gods' Holy Spirit.

A pastor's "manner of life" is always characterized and shaped by the context in which he has to do ministry. It is the context of his church and congregation on the one hand and the secular society on the other. Both have their strong influence on us, on our thinking, feelings, reactions, decisions, whether we realize it or not, accept it or not. And both, church and congregation as well as secular society, have their very distinct expectations as to what a pastor's life should look like.

"A pastor is different" - this was the title of an essay published by a German professor of Practical Theology some years ago. I guess he was right in making this statement. At first sight we may have a different opinion; we may believe that a pastor's life is not so different from any other Christian's life. For a pastor is not any better than other Christians. He is indeed a poor sinful being, he is in need of mercy, grace, forgiveness and salvation, just like others; in need of a Saviour. He is able to do wrong, just like anyone else. He can lose his confidence, faith, trust in Christ. He is able to fall into error and false teaching. He can become lazy, become discouraged and disappointed. He can lose heart and be desperate and frustrated. But on the other hand he has reason enough to be thankful, perhaps even more than other people. But in general he is just like anyone else. Insofar his "manner of life" (if that means: how he works out and lives out his relationship to God) cannot be much different from any other Christians' life.

However, a pastor is in a particular position and situation. Not better in person, but called to be other Christians' shepherd; called to be a servant and ambassador of Christ. As such and in this position which he cannot escape the fact that his life will be somewhat different. Otherwise St. Paul would not have given so much pastoral advice in his letters to Timothy and Titus. There can be no doubt: a pastor is supposed to give an example. People look at him, how he presents himself to others. The first to look at him is his family. He has to care for his own family first. He is re-sponsible for them. And sometimes they will try to correct him. He should be grateful for having such a critical vis-a-vis. As a human being he's not better than anyone else, but he is called to be Christ's representative: "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life..." (Matthew 20:28). A pastor should try to come as close to this "prototype" as he possibly can.

2. Conceptions of a Pastor

Before we go into details concerning pastor's "manner of life", let us pay some attention to what

a pastor actually is like or should be, what kind of self-understanding he may have, and what picture of a pastor other people may have.

I find about *six different types* of how a pastor could be described and how people often look on him. I would like to use them as a kind of mirror into which we look and see if we can recognize ourselves in any of them.

Type 1: He is the boss. That's how he perhaps regards himself and how people look on him. He always has to sit in the front seat; he has to speak first and make the final decision; he is the commander; he is master. Perhaps he expects to be treated accordingly. Having a Lord, a Master above him – that's more a matter of theory than of reality. And even if he feels sometimes that he is in fact a poor miserable sinner and realizes all his shortcomings, he will not easily admit it or let other people know about it. That part of him he wants to hide.

Type 2: The pastor sees himself as an employee of the congregation, more so than Christ's employee. He feels not only responsible for the congregation, but he tries hard to please every member by every means. Perhaps sometimes he is afraid that he could be fired someday if he doesn't please them. Whatever elders or voters or other individuals ask him to do – he will try to get it done in order to be “everybody's darling”. He is looking and longing for support and approval.

Type 3: He is the stimulator of the congregation; he works hard in keeping his people in the mood and feeling good; or he may regard himself as a supervisor and expert. After all, he has spent so many years in seminary, studying theology. So he is an expert in some special fields, mainly in all questions concerning theology. But except for these special matters he does not feel responsible. And so he limits himself and his activities to what he feels he could support or incite, or what he should supervise, or what he is an expert for – let others do the rest.

Type 4: The pastor is like a coach, a trainer. That's a very popular idea today, at least in Europe. And it is a quite dangerous idea, too. For a coach is always trying to get the most out of his team, to make it win by all means, to keep pressing it for more, to make it better than other teams, to put it in the first place. In this way he has to ask himself constantly: How are others doing? Are they any better? What kind of methods and tricks do I need to beat them? A coach is constantly in competition, comparing his work with that of others. He wants his team, his congregation (and himself) to be the

best.

Type 5: The pastor is looked upon as a universalist. He is supposed to know everything, to master every situation and problem, to be fit for every task, having an answer to all questions, doing everything in his church. Sooner or later he will get exhausted, feeling quite unhappy; for he is busy all the time. People expect him to do everything and be everywhere – something he can never live up to. The burn-out-syndrome will catch up with him, a wide-spread phenomenon nowadays.

Finally, type 6: The pastor seeks to be his Master's servant and a good “father” (in the best sense of the word) to his people – representing Christ in all humility to the people entrusted to him. He often thinks how his Master would like him to speak, to act, to work, to show love, to admonish, and so on. He cares for his people. In the German we have the term “Seelsorger” for someone in the ministry, which means: someone to “care for the souls”. This German word can hardly be translated into the English. Perhaps the word “shepherd” and “shepherding” would meet it best. He is well aware of never being able to fully do his work and live up to his Master's example. But he knows how and where to find forgiveness.

All these different conceptions and pictures of a pastor – and there are certainly a couple more I could mention – will somehow influence his “manner of life”. And his life of course reflects his own self-understanding and influences his way of doing his work. A pastor's “manner of life” is an offspring from how he sees himself, how people see him – at least to a large extent.

I believe, a pastor in the Lutheran church today has something of all these six different types I listed. We cannot escape our tradition nor the examples (negative or positive) which we have in mind when thinking of a pastor, examples that have shaped our thinking one way or the other. We cannot escape the expectations people have, their desires, their hopes, their wishes. We cannot escape influences from the outside. But we should always realize what we are called to be, and who it is who called us to serve Him. In my own church's liturgy of ordination it reads like this: a pastor is entrusted with the ministry of word and sacrament and consecrated (i.e. singled out and blessed) to be a servant of the church universal.

To be a mere servant, nothing else, goes completely against the natural man's feelings. The “natural man”, the “Old Adam”, does not like to serve, but wants to rule and be and go first. Therefore

we pastors are in great danger: either to become proud, haughty, self-confident, self-complacent. Or, on the contrary – fall into despair, lose confidence, give up hope, feel frustrated. We need to care for our own souls, I said before. We need help, forgiveness, comfort, as well as someone to straighten us out. We need Christ to be on our side, the Holy Spirit to be in us. That's what we need most if we should get away from the aforementioned dangers, “so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice, and that, although we may be attacked by them, we may finally prevail and gain the victory” (Small Catechism, Sixth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, Kolb-Wengert p. 358). St. Paul assured Timothy over and over again: you have Christ with you, you have His grace, His gift, the Spirit has come to you. Don't be afraid, don't give up, don't resign – in spite of all your weakness.

3. Organizing Pastor's Work

Having outlined somewhat our particular condition as pastors, let us now take a look at how we might “organize” our “manner of life” accordingly. Let me start out with a number of questions we have to ask ourselves:

How do we begin our daily work: with a new commitment to our Lord every morning, to Him who baptized us, who called us, who placed us into the ministry, who sends us out? To do so would include that we accept to be different from others, ready to accept our specific obligation, namely to give an example of Christian life. In Europe we have a debate among pastors from time to time on the question: are there different ethical standards for a pastor compared with other Christians? Can you expect more or something specific from a pastor? And I would say: Yes, indeed, you can. Not because a pastor is by nature any better, any higher or whatever, not at all. But he is called to give an example, and that makes the difference. He has a higher responsibility and will have to give account for it. So let us make it a part of our devotional life asking our Lord to help us to accept the difference and be an example. And let us examine how we behave, how we react, how we speak, how we keep silent, how we dress, what we do in our free time. It struck me very much and made me concerned when I learned about a survey taken some time ago about what impression people normally get from someone whom they meet: The very first impression in the first four (4!) minutes will remain almost for ever. With 90% of all people it will never change.

55 % will remember what we looked like, how we dressed, and how we behaved. Only 38% will remember our language, how we talked. And finally only 7% will still know what we have said. I don't

know how reliable this survey is and whether it can be applied to Canadians as well. But we can get at least an idea of how great our responsibility is that we should never and nowhere become an obstacle to the message we are supposed to bring and to the Spirit ready to work through our message.

a) Time Management, well planned and organized, is an important presupposition for a pastor's work to be effective. The outcome of his efforts will be poor if he cannot manage his time; that he is simply and constantly lacking time, making others and himself believe that the day as God has made it in creation is not long enough to do all he wants to accomplish. A pastor presenting himself as being permanently under the pressure of time does not give anyone the impression that he will have time to pray, to listen, to think about problems, to prepare himself seriously. But believe me, God's creation was good indeed also with respect to the length of a day. It's mostly our own fault, our poor time management, which often fails and puts us under pressure. We can learn a lot from secular manager training, how to aim at certain targets, how to establish priorities, how to decide on what is really necessary – and you will see how much time you really have. 24 hours are indeed enough to get done what has to be done and still find the necessary rest and recreation as well. We simply have to find out what has to be done first, what can wait, how to establish priorities, how much time we will need for them.

In this connection let me say a word about reserving a certain time, a certain period each day just for prayer, for meditation, for Bible study. Start out in the morning with such matters, restrict it to a limited space, a limited period, but keep such times regularly and be punctual. It will be of tremendous help. In the beginning it will require some effort to force oneself to do it, because the Old Adam likes to waste time. The great Dr. Hermann Sasse once told me of Augustin Cardinal Bea whom he met in Rome, having said to him: "I have time, but I have no time to waste". That's a wise remark which we should remember.

To structure your "manner of life", to organize your work, you should know what you really need, what really helps you. Luther said: "Oratio, meditatio, tentatio faciunt theologum", i.e. prayer, meditation (which means primarily Bible study), and the constant temptation to which we are exposed shape a theologian (not in the scholarly sense, but as a pastor). Let us now go a little bit along that line: The last one, temptation, is not so much in the foreground, it comes by itself. But the other two are important.

b) Prayer comes first. Think of the Apostle writing to Timothy: "...without ceasing I re-member you in my prayers night and day" (1:3). Isn't that an example given to us to follow? I have in mind the somewhat surprising hint which a German professor, well experienced in practical theology and pastoral care, once gave me saying, "Expect more fruit and effectiveness from your prayers than from your sermons, your preaching and teaching. Your words will probably not effect as much as your prayers will do". Was he right? I guess it could well be. We are probably well advised if we establish for ourselves an order for when and what and for how long to pray, and keep it carefully. There is an old saying in Latin, "Servabis ordinem, et ordo servabit te" (= keep the order, and the order will keep you). You may prefer traditional forms of prayer for your personal daily devotion (like Matins, Vespers, Compline, which you can find in the Lutheran Service Book or other hymn-books). You may make up your own form of prayer. You may prefer formulated prayers guiding your thoughts into a certain direction and keeping them from going astray. You may find it better to speak your own free prayers with words you choose yourself. But make it a regular thing. In some areas in Germany it was customary in former times that the church bell rang every day at 12 o'clock. And the pastor had to be in church, to pray for his congregation, the doors of the church wide open. Everyone passing by should see him praying. This was for checking out whether the pastor did his job and fulfilled his duties. This custom is not common any more, but it was a wholesome custom.

Let us pray for all members of the flock which you have on your membership list. Take just a few names every day and bring them to our heavenly Father. Pass through that list, and when you are through with it, start over again. Pray for your brethren in the ministry, your district and church presidents, they need it. Pray in particular for those you do not understand, who are a burden to you and give you reason to complain. The more you pray for someone, the less you are tempted to talk badly about him. Pray for the church altogether, worldwide, for the young churches overseas in the mission field, for suffering and persecuted Christians all around the globe. Pray for peace and justice, for freedom and the wellbeing of all. Pray for politicians and managers and leaders who are called upon to make decisions and often don't know how to decide. Pray for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the dying. And if you feel like you're running out of "material" to pray for, just open the newspaper or turn on TV news, and you will find enough reasons and subjects to pray for. This world is always in a miserable situation and will continue to be so. The devil will never give up. So we have to fight him, by prayer, constantly. But never forget to start out with giving thanks to God, just as St. Paul did. For there is no event, no person, no subject, no situation for which we could not find a reason to thank for.

c) Meditation comes next after prayer. We should not take “meditation” in a more or less narrow sense of the word, as it is quite often taken today. In Luther's time meditation included the reading and study of God's word, listening to His voice, keeping silent, thinking about it: what is He going to tell me today, what is His message? Question is: are we ready to do that, to read through the entire Bible continuously? Or are we satisfied with small portions from time to time, a kind of spiritual “fast-food”? I would strongly recommend to try again reading through the Holy Scriptures as a whole, in order to “know the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ” - quoting St. Paul (3:15). Get used to a regular order, taking a small portion for each day. Read it in your mother tongue, and – if possible and you have once learned them – in the biblical languages as well. Step by step you can thereby walk through the entire Bible.

Get familiar also with the Symbolical Books, our Lutheran Confessions, which indeed are the “good deposit” we have to guard, helping us so marvellously to straighten out our theology and preaching. There you will learn (or polish up what you once learned) about Law and Gospel, justification and sanctification (and how to distinguish them correctly), about Christ and the ministry He has given to us, the church and the two kingdoms in which God is ruling us, and so forth: it's an inexhaustible fountain. And the more you know of it, the more your preaching and teaching will get a clear profile and get richer. The more you will be able “to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1st Peter 3:15).

If you like to go on with “meditating”, take and read theological books. Not only small brochures, magazine articles, essays, but real books. Not only what you need for the next ladies' aid meeting, bible class, youth group or the like. Read dogmatics, or work yourself through a commentary of one of the biblical books, or take church history, history of dogma or whatsoever. Change the subject of your studies from time to time, but choose not only your favorite ones. It will bring you a lot, enrich your knowledge, expand your horizon.

At this point I would like to add: learn to listen to other people and to your brethren in particular. We pastors normally don't have much of an opportunity to hear other pastor's sermons, to listen to the Word of God preached to us. Therefore try to listen and learn how to listen. Read once in a while a printed sermon, carefully, prayerfully, as if it were just preached to you.

Finally: meditate your own ministry, how you do it. Think about your daily work, your

shortcomings, your problems, your life, and – not to forget – do it all in the horizon of the life to come. Remember that you need to be saved yourself. “Meditatio vitae aeternae”, meditation on eternal life – that's what lifts you up above the quarrels and troubles of the ordinary day. It puts the problems that bother you somewhat aside, and it tells you what really matters. It helps you to get beyond failure and lack of success from which we suffer sometimes. After all we expect our re-demption to draw near (Luke 21:8).

d) That brings me to the next item, namely confession. That's something we have lost almost completely in the Lutheran Churches of today. Luther and the Reformers held private confession in great esteem and never did away with it. Accordingly, Article XI of the Augsburg Confession teaches us “concerning private confession...that private absolution [“privata absolutio”, i.e. Latin technical term for receiving personal forgiveness after the confession of sins to a priest] should be retained and not abolished” (Kolb-Wengert p. 44). Should we pastors not have a “father confessor” (or “brother confessor”) to whom we speak from time to time, but regularly, to clean up the inner man, our soul, to get advice and foremost the absolution from all our guilt? Absolution is always Gospel in its purest form. We should, I think, examine our life from time to time, know about our sin, learn about our favorite sins and how to fight them. How can we do that without confessing? Paul reminded Timothy to fight as a good soldier of Christ. And we – if we preach forgiveness and do not long for it ourselves, do we not lose our credibility? That's true also and in particular for holy communion: if we don't make use of it ourselves, as often as possible, how can we invite our members to receive it frequently (as we should)? It is not so that we just have to administer this wonderful sacrament. It is also that we have to receive it in order to be lifted up and be strengthened in our own faith. Therefore: take and eat, take and drink the true Body and Blood of Christ, I repeat: as often as possible, along with your congregation and when you visit the shut-ins for private communion.

In this connection Luther in the Small Catechism spoke of “fasting and bodily preparation”, which he regarded to be “a fine external discipline” (Kolb-Wengert p. 363). He made it perfectly clear that faith is of course by far the more important. You know that, you have learned it. But let us ask ourselves: are we ready to “fasten” at all, to give up something, to relinquish? Do we know that this is quite helpful – for body and soul? It may be food or drink, amusement, diversion, or whatever takes our time and energy, like TV, video, computer, internet surfing and so on. And what about our financial conduct in this connection? We are asked to contribute to the church's needs – do we give joyfully, realizing that our money and all values we have is God's property, laid into our hands for a short time?

Do we trust that God will refund us in His way, as He wants to do it, if we give generously? And that we will never be any poorer by giving richly? Test it, try it and you will be surprised and see it's true.

e) Coming to the end of my presentation, let me add some remarks about our preaching the Word of God, Christ's Gospel. We will still have in our ears St. Paul's' urgent appeal to Timothy: "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching... " (4:2). You know that we are supposed to do that likewise, preaching the Word of God, nothing else. We are supposed to do it correctly. That means: we have to prepare our sermons carefully, not preaching our own feelings, our imagination, everything that comes from inside ourselves.

In St. Mary's church in Wittenberg, Germany, where Luther used to preach, you find still today the famous painting of Lucas Cranach the Younger of 1547, portraying Luther and the Reformers and the sacraments. I don't know of any better interpretation of what preaching is all about, at least in a painting. At the bottom of this painting, the Predella, you see Luther on the right side, standing in the pulpit. To the left you see the congregation assembled to hear God's Word. Luther's left hand is laid on the open Bible, his right hand is stretched out pointing to the crucified Christ whom you see in the middle, and the Holy Spirit is blowing – you can see it demonstrated by the loin-cloth stirred up in heavy movement. What a marvelous presentation of sound, biblical preaching! Luther's left hand grasping at the Scriptures' content, almost like pulling at it, tearing them it from this book; and what he has in his hand goes through his heart and mouth, but it does not remain with him, it goes out when he points to Christ on the cross: it's Him who he is preaching to the congregation assembled at Christ's right side, on the left of the painting. This Luther is not preaching something like "I guess, I think, it is my opinion, I have found, it's my understanding" or the like. We have to preach Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. We should keep silent where the Scriptures do not speak, not trying to fill out presumed gaps with our own assumptions and ideas. We should not speculate nor try to sell our psychological insights we believe to have. Tell your hearers what is written. Preach Law and Gospel, carefully distinguished. Let them know the only way to salvation, namely Jesus Christ. Invite your hearers to come to communion and get united with Christ and to find what Luther called the "fröhlichen Wechsel", the joyful exchange: Christ giving us His innocence, we give Him our sin and guilt. Exchanging captivity for release, our condemnation for forgiveness, eternal punishment for holy absolution, and death for eternal life.

We Lutherans have learned to put a special accent on the “Word of God”, and forget sometimes that the Word is not only the audible one which is preached, which we can hear with our ears or read ourselves in the Bible. It is the visible Word as well, to be found in the Sacraments which Christ has instituted. We should never play off one against the other and think of the Sacra-ments as of inferior quality or importance. The painting in Wittenberg I just referred to shows Luther preaching and thereby supporting and carrying out what is painted and placed above the preacher, namely holy baptism, the Lord's Supper and holy absolution. For these the preached Word is so-to-say the substructure, the basis. The one cannot be without the other. Therefore: preach Christ, the whole Christ, and tell the people how He wants to come to them. Preach Christ always in such a way as if it were the last sermon someone in your audience will ever hear in his life, the last chance to find the Redeemer.

As a rule: Start preparing your sermon as early as possible in the week, and have it done by Thursday if possible (for preaching it on Sunday). That gives you time enough to cope with unexpected requirements or claims coming all of a sudden during the week. Time enough also to learn it by heart and preach it in free delivery without looking down to your manuscript all the time; that makes it much easier for the hearers to concentrate on what you have to say.

Be careful and conscientious about preparing not only your sermon, but the entire worship service as well. Pay attention to the liturgy – it is “doctrine in prayer”. And furthermore: prepare carefully just as well all your teaching in confirmation class, adult instruction and what else. Be hard-working in visiting your members and other people, always preparing yourself by prayer. Never give up any person entrusted to your care. If you have trouble with him (or her): try to understand and to argue yourself as he or she would do. It helps a lot to find out his (or her) good reasons for being so nasty, so difficult, so hard to take.

Be direct, but do not talk in a critical way about others or those not directly involved. You have to observe the confessional secret under all circumstances, not revealing a single word, a single name entrusted to your discretion.

Is it too much, too difficult, too heavy a burden what I tried to recommend so far? I hope you will not feel that way. I did not want to become legalistic, giving the impression: there are only expectations that we have to live up to, duties to fulfill, demands and claims to respond to, only what we should bring – and no comfort, no encouragement, no patience with our weakness. Instead, I wanted to give

you some help, to let you know: you are never left alone, you are forgiven, you are elected, you are protected, you are supported by Him who appointed you to be His preacher. It's only He to whom you have to give account. But from this account I cannot release you. Nevertheless, don't be afraid – He is a merciful Saviour!

When I had to ordain pastors to the office of the holy ministry as bishop of my church, I often used to quote the famous church father, patriarch and great preacher St. Chrysostom. He said: “Mirum est si sacerdos salvetur”, “it's a miracle if a priest, a servant of Christ, is saved” And I always added: but we have such a God, such a Savior who in fact does this miracle!

Your manner of life has this goal, it is directed to making a “saint” of you and of those who hear you and look to you. Let us take steps in this direction, day by day, one after the other. We ought to be saints, sainted by the grace of Christ, so that we can say with St. Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

IV. A CLOSING PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

I would like to close my presentation with a *Prayer for the Church*:

O Lord, merciful, eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in time past was gracious to Thy people and forgave their sins; be gracious even now to Thy people; renew Thy Church through the pure preaching of Thy Holy Word, the right use of the venerable Sacraments, and the comforting absolution. Enlighten all Thy servants, that they may be found faithful stewards of Thy mysteries and may exercise the holy Office of the Keys in truthfulness. Preserve them in all the attacks of the devil, comfort them through the forgiveness of their sins, and fill them with burning love toward Thee and Thy congregation. From Thy faithful people call workers into Thy harvest, and give them teachers to instruct them in the right faith. Cause unity in Spirit, in faith, and in confession to grow. Send Thy Holy Spirit to cleanse the hearts of all who love Thy name and remove from them false doctrine and human inventions. Take away from the souls of all who eat one bread and drink from one cup with us whatever hinders them from becoming one in truth. Purify, cleanse, and strengthen our hearts, and give us moderation and wisdom, that we may not strive against Thy Spirit in impatience and, instead of building, destroy what living faith Thy mercy has still preserved. To Thy grace we commend all our brethren bound to us in Christ. Preserve them, Lord, in body and soul, and bless them with Thy gifts of

grace, that they may serve Thee as faithful workers in Thy vine-yard. O Lord, let me also be found ever faithful, and serve Thee always in the true humility with which Thy Son bore His own cross. O Lord, direct all our days and our deeds in Thy peace.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(Prayer for the Church, in: The Brotherhood Prayerbook, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, Kansas City 2007, p. 352f. [Translation of the German “Tägliches Gebet der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gebetsbruderschaft für die Kirche”, in: Das Leipziger Brevier, 2008])