

# 1 Timothy 6:17-21

Pentecost 10, Supplement Series A, August 13, 2017

Theme: Guard what has been entrusted to you

I. Taking hold of what is truly life

II. Turning from what is falsely called “knowledge”

INJ Some things are worth protecting, so you take care to keep them safe. When you get out of the car, you lock it. You keep your purse or wallet close when you are in a crowded space. Your passwords and login information for digital access are secure. These things have value to you, and you know that someone could take them from you. You guard them.

Let’s talk about our Christian faith and life. It is valuable to you, right? How do you keep it safe? What measures do you take so that you don’t lose it or have it taken from you? In our lesson the Apostle Paul encourages us to guard the Christian faith that God has given us. Paul makes a contrast: Some things seem valuable but they are not, so take hold of what is truly life. What is falsely called knowledge is a trap for your faith, so turn from it and guard what has been entrusted to you! Paul says, “Instruct those who are rich in this present age not to be arrogant or to put their hope in the uncertainty of riches, but rather in God, who richly supplies us with all things for our enjoyment.”

So, here is the trouble. We are rich in this present age. We have all kinds of possessions way beyond what we need to live. We have more than one vehicle, more than one electronic device, more than one game system, more than one refrigerator! We easily put our hope in the uncertainty of our riches. We can be arrogant, thinking we deserve what we enjoy.

I don’t have to tell you to guard the possessions that God has given you. You lock them up, you secure them, you maintain them and use them regularly. Your home and your hobby and your vacation and your business and your retirement – if you neglect them they will deteriorate and fail. You work hard so that doesn’t happen! Yet none of those valuable things will last – despite all the energy you invest and all the cash you spend on them. Though these are good gifts from God meant for your enjoyment, do not put your trust in them! They are fleeting and uncertain. Life is not truly life if you have all those things but forfeit your soul.

What is truly life is trusting that Jesus is your only Savior. Life is the daily assurance that he has forgiven all your sins. Nothing is more valuable! The life that matters is fed by the gospel and nurtured among fellow believers. When the Holy Spirit has given what is truly life, it shows in the fruits of faith. You live a life of repentance and display actions of kindness

and generosity. The life connected to Jesus by his gospel is truly life, because physical death in your body does not end it. God gives peace now and eternal life in heaven. What is truly life is not measured by your worldly possessions, but it is more precious than all of them put together.

St. Paul says, “Guard what has been entrusted to you.” He continues, “Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share. In this way they are storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” What is the value of life if there is no room in it for Jesus? You may have entertainment and education and activity and fun, but without a Savior from sin, life is empty. Guard your Christian faith, taking hold of what is truly life!

It comes back to the realization that you have something valuable, and there are those who would take it from you. Guard what has been entrusted to you. You started with nothing. Less than nothing. You were spiritually an enemy of God and opposed to everything he is. Your guilt stuck to you and was impossible to remove. God’s anger burned against you and condemned you. Nothing valuable existed there. It wasn’t truly life.

Until God intervened. He sent his Son to stand in your place under the curse of sin. He suffered the punishment of death for you. He paid the debt completely. Then Jesus rose from the dead to proclaim victory and forgiveness and to give what is truly life to all who trust in him.

God intervened in your life at Baptism, sending his Holy Spirit and giving you the new life of faith. God touches you with life every time you hear his promises and receive his Supper. You have precious gifts from God: He calls you his dear child. He declares you justified. By his Word he comforts you and helps you. He has prepared a heavenly home for you. Jesus is with you always. God’s precious promises define what is truly life!

We can take for granted the spiritual riches that are ours in Christ Jesus. We sink into selfish preoccupation and worldly activism. It seems like life would be unbearable without the outward trinkets that command our time and energy. But the treasure of the gospel makes each moment precious even without those things! You don’t want to lose what is more valuable. I have seen those shows where someone put a priceless item on the garage sale or flea market. They sold it for nothing. They didn’t even know what they had lost until someone told them. You wouldn’t want that to happen to your Christian faith, would you?

The pull of a secular or outward and empty life is constant. It tells you that you need to focus on yourself and what you need. You must work and have rest. Your goals are important, right? How about family time? A

place to have fun and to hang out, to eat and to relax. When I listen to the worldly view of life, I fall into the trap of being the center of my own attention. After all, who is more important than me? What is more important than now? I deserve what I want. I need to be me.

Apart from Jesus, that is not truly life! It is just darkness and death. Jesus' forgiveness gives each moment meaning. With faith that stands boldly on a risen Savior, I have what is truly life. I can be generous and confident and kind and do good. Knowing that our Savior guarantees heaven, we all can use our worldly riches to give him glory and to serve his kingdom.

Or, we can fritter it all away. We can stop paying attention to what is really life, and have it stolen from us. Perhaps we won't even notice that it is gone, because we haven't treated it as valuable. Guard what has been entrusted to you! God has given you peace by his forgiveness. He has given you confidence by his inspired word. He has given you comfort in any trouble. Jesus is the treasure of a good foundation for the future. Guard what has been entrusted to you. Take hold of what is truly life by clinging to the words of God and receiving the Sacrament often.

When we have trouble following through with the protection of our Christian faith, it is not always that we don't know how valuable it is. As with other things, it is often that we lose track and fail to actually guard our faith. Like with computers. Do you backup regularly? You know you should. Do you use security software? Change your passwords and use a strong sequence? Do you think the hackers consider you an easy target?

Or, in public places, do you ever walk alone? Do you pay attention to your phone rather than the people around you? Do you think no one will notice you? Satan and the world have you in their sights. They want to steal you away from Jesus. To separate you from his word. To fill your life with things that are falsely called "knowledge." Turn away from what is empty and guard what has been entrusted to you!

Paul says with heartfelt emotion, "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, turning away from godless, empty talk and the contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge." By professing it, some have veered away from the faith."

Sometimes the godless, empty talk of the world is enticing. Is the Christian faith out of touch with modern society? Is human investigation so spectacular that we don't need God's Word anymore? Is it seducing that medicine can cure or heal diseases and ailments so we hardly need God? Is it difficult to gather around the Word with fellow believers when sports and entertainment come on every screen? Being among God's people is immeasurably more valuable, but we so often choose to veer away.

The problem isn't that we fall for the scam of false teachers. The problem is that secularly "wise" paths lead away from Jesus, and we don't care. We walk along, drifting away from the Christian faith. And we don't notice! This ought to be obvious to us: The common worldly point of view is contrary to a Christian confession. Does the knowledge of Scripture keep our feet firmly planted in the truth, or have we fallen for fluff? It may be called "wisdom" among those who are perishing, but it does not make us "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." A life resting on what is falsely called knowledge is not life at all. It is really death – spiritual death that leads to eternal death.

O Timothy! Dear friends! Guard what has been entrusted to you. God has given you grace words, not empty, fake "knowledge" words. Paul ends his letter this way: "Grace be with you." Grace words announce that God came in the flesh to save sinners. Grace words bring the Holy Spirit into our hearts. Grace words: Go in peace. Your sins are forgiven. Grace words build up the Christian faith and lead to eternal life. God has entrusted you with grace words that are active, powerful and last forever.

Guard what has been entrusted to you. Guard your connection with God's Word. Guard your time with the Bible and the people who confess its truth. The enemies seek to devour you! They don't play around and they don't back off. You have what is more valuable than anything else: God's love in Christ and his forgiveness – grace words. Guard them constantly and keep them close. Or lose them. Those are the options. Pay attention to Jesus or lose him. I urge you to put in the work to guard what you have been given – and to spread it around to others. Your Christian faith is precious, whether you think about it that way or not.

Some people save things that are useless. Do you keep the twisty ties from the bread bag? Why? Sometimes we have to learn to part with things that are not important, and focus on what is truly important. Do you have to get rid of clutter that is interfering with your life in Jesus?

Or the opposite. Some people don't keep anything. They throw out what is unused so it doesn't take up space. They have no room for junk! Is your Christian faith at risk of being tossed out because you haven't used it enough? Guard what has been entrusted to you!

How long would it take you to notice if your Savior and his word were absent from your life? Too long! God tells us that our Christian faith is more valuable than anything else, and the enemy prowls around seeking to devour. Guard what has been entrusted to you. Standing on the foundation of Jesus Christ and his promises, you have what is truly life. "Grace be with you." SDG Amen.