

Advent Devotional December 19, 2021

Scripture

Titus 1:1-16

¹ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness, ² in the hope of eternal life that God, who never lies, promised before the ages began— ³ in due time he revealed his word through the proclamation with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior,

⁴ To Titus, my loyal child in the faith we share:

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

⁵ I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: ⁶ someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. ⁷ For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; ⁸ but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. ⁹ He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

¹⁰ There are also many rebellious people, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision; ¹¹ they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain what it is not right to teach. ¹² It was one of them, their very own prophet, who said,

"Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons."

¹³ That testimony is true. For this reason rebuke them sharply, so that they may become sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not paying attention to Jewish myths or to commandments of those who reject the truth. ¹⁵ To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure. Their very minds and consciences are corrupted. ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but they deny him by their actions. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Devotional

The Rev. Lee Platt '02

Paul's pastoral letter to Titus doesn't get much attention. Pieces of Chapters 2 and 3 occur only in the Lectionary's Christmas Eve or Christmas Day readings, but never Chapter 1 in any Sunday readings. Verse 15 of Chapter 1 is especially intriguing, especially as we approach Christmas, when purity (like that of the Virgin Mary and the Christ child) is central.

Paul wrote to Titus as some people were attempting to impose additional rules on the new Christian believers. Among the most notable of these rules was the need for Gentile converts to be circumcised. Paul called these instigators "distractions." Those distractors were trying to exclude the uncircumcised because they were supposedly impure.

I think Paul is telling Titus that in the eyes of Jesus, everything and everyone is pure and not to be excluded. Not only are the accusations of impurity by human rule-makers untrue, but those rule-makers are themselves impure! Purity comes through faith in Jesus Christ, not through the works of the law (Galatians 2:15-21). When we discard the law and robe ourselves with faith in Jesus, we put on new eyeglasses that enable us to see everyone in purity. Those we might have excluded as impure, through the eyes of Jesus, are pure.

Prayer

God, you have created all in your image, and despite our frailties, you regard each of us as pure. Clothe us in full faith in your Son Jesus that we might look through his eyes at our neighbors and joyfully include them as those made in your image. Amen.