

Pastor Chris Matthis  
Epiphany Lutheran Church, Castle Rock, Colorado  
Proper 20 (Pentecost 15), Series C  
Saturday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019  
Sunday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019

**Sermon:** What's a Girl to Do?

**Text:** 1 Timothy 2:1-15

**Focus:** God saved us by sending his Son to be born of a woman.

**Function:** That they would live out the distinct callings God gives them as men and women.

**Structure:** Text-Application

**Locus:** "We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it" (SC, 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment).

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. What's a girl to do? That might be your reaction after hearing today's extremely unpopular epistle lesson, especially these verses: "Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather she is to remain quiet" (1 Tim. 2:11-12, ESV).<sup>1</sup> As you might imagine, this is *not* a Scripture passage that liberal Protestant churches, such as the ELCA, include in their lectionaries. They decided during the era of women's liberation that, clearly, the apostle Paul was a crusty, old, woman-hater to be promptly ignored and put out to pasture with all the other misogynistic men who wrote the Bible.

But for those of us who believe the Bible is true and that every single Word of Scripture is divinely inspired and inerrant (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17), we may not so glibly overlook or expunge passages that offend our modern sensibilities. The apostle Paul was called by God (1:1), a fully-authorized representative of Jesus Christ. The words he wrote and spoke were the very Word of God (2 Pet. 3:15-16). So even when Paul writes such statements as "*I* do not

---

<sup>1</sup> All Scripture references, unless otherwise indicated, are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version.

permit...” (1 Tim. 2:12a), we are right to understand this as divine command—and not merely Paul’s personal opinion. Rather, what we must do is wrestle with the simple words of Scripture and apply them to our life together in Christ.

So what *is* a woman’s place in the Church? What is the role of a Christian woman? Thus the title of today’s message: “What’s a Girl to Do?” I will attempt to answer that concisely in today’s sermon, but I beg you to bear with me patiently and hear me out before you decide to walk out of worship in protest today.

Here is our first principle: God desires *men*, not women, to exercise spiritual leadership in the family and in the church. Paul expressly states that “in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling” (1 Tim. 2:8). Men should lead the prayers in public worship because men were created first—the so-called “order of creation” (2:13). Furthermore, even though Adam and Eve both sinned in the Garden, the woman was deceived and duped by the serpent, whereas Adam was not; instead, he willfully, knowingly entered into her sin by listening to his wife (Gen. 3:17). In the restored order that Christ brings in the new creation, the wife submits to her husband “as to the Lord” (Eph. 5:22).

But lest you think that God lets Adam off the hook easily, recall that the blame for original sin is cast at Adam’s feet in Romans 5, not Eve’s. Furthermore, the husband has a harder job than the wife. Yes, she is called to submit to (or obey) her husband. She surrenders authority and her will; but he is commanded to lay down his *life* for her, protecting her and helping her to become the holy woman God created and calls her to be (Eph. 5:25-30). God commands husbands to love their wives “as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25). I will leave it to your own discernment to determine whether submitting or dying is harder.

Male headship is not only God’s design for the family, but also for the Church (1 Cor. 11:3). Pastors (elders) and deacons are to be the husbands of one wife (3:2, 12)—literally, a one-woman man—which indicates that women are not intended for ordination into the Office of the Holy Ministry. After all, a female “pastor” cannot be a one-woman man, and there is no mention in the New Testament of the “husbands” of female pastors. Greek does not have a generic, neuter term for a “spouse.”

So if the men are to pray and lead the public worship (1 Tim. 2:8), what are the women to do in the Church? First, they are to adorn themselves with good works (v. 10). Rather than celebrating outward beauty (hair, clothes, jewelry), they are to focus on the inner beauty of Christian character and loving and serving others, demonstrating hospitality and washing the feet of the saints (2:9-10; 5:10).

Second, the women are supposed to learn God’s Word quietly and respectfully in the worship (2:11). They are not to preach or teach in a way that indicates spiritual authority over men (again, part of the reason they mustn’t be pastors in Christ’s Church). This has nothing to do with the supposed lack of talent or ability by women to teach or lead. Rather, it is a matter of God’s order. “For God is not a God of confusion but of peace” (1 Cor. 14:33a).

Some liberals object that the Greek word for “woman” in verses 11 and 12 can also mean “wife.” Perhaps, they suggest, only *married* women are not permitted to teach or exercise authority over their husbands. This is absurd, of course, for why would an unmarried woman under her father’s headship have more authority in the church than a married woman? Furthermore, St. Paul states quite clearly in another place that this ban on women teaching in public worship was in place “in *all* the churches” (1 Cor. 14:33-34). “For it is shameful for a woman to speak in Church” (1 Cor. 14:35).

Because of Paul's command in 1 Timothy 2, some churches do not allow women to read the Scriptures during the worship service. Others, such as the Wisconsin Synod, do not allow women to vote in congregational assemblies or serve on church boards. But I think that goes a little too far.

For even though women are not supposed to teach or have authority over men in the church, that does not mean they cannot teach anyone at any time; nor does it mean that they must remain absolutely silent for the entire worship service. In fact, Paul himself gives instructions for *how* women should pray in church and even how they should *prophesy* (1 Cor. 11:4-16). If women are permitted to prophesy under divine inspiration and the impulse of the Holy Spirit, why should they be kept from reading the Word of God?

Furthermore, even though women are not supposed to teach men or have spiritual authority over them, the Bible *does* say that women should teach children and *other women*. "Older women," writes Paul in Titus 2, "...are to teach what is good, and so train young women to love their husbands and children... that the word of God may not be reviled" (Tit. 2:3-5). Mothers *do* have authority over their children. "Honor your father *and your mother*..." (Ex. 20:12). Timothy, who was Paul's protégé and the recipient of this letter, was himself taught the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). In the absence of a Christian father, a Christian mother *must* take charge of her children's religious instruction so that they may hear the Word of God, believe, and be saved. They may even lead their unbelieving husbands to faith in Christ (1 Cor. 7:16).

So even though the Church does not permit women to be pastors over the entire flock of God's Church, the Lord calls women to serve in many meaningful ways, both professionally and as volunteers. They can serve as Directors of Christian Education, music directors, deaconesses,

or parochial school teachers. Most Sunday school teachers are women. Women may teach Bible studies for other women. Women may visit the sick and pray for them. Women serve in leadership on the Church Council. Our VBS directors mostly have been women. Our DCE intern, Kristin, is a smart, capable woman who leads and oversees our youth and children's ministries. Women vote in our congregational meetings and Church Council meetings. As you can see, God offers many wonderful ways for women to serve in our congregation. We should give thanks to God and *praise* the women who lead, teach, pray, and serve at Epiphany and throughout our church body, The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. Thank God for women in the Church and the kingdom of God! We would be lost without them.

So far today, we've spent a lot of time talking about what women should and should not do in Church. But do's and don'ts are all law. Where is the Gospel in today's epistle? What is the Good News God has for us?

First, God desires all people to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4). Obviously, that includes women! God loves the whole world, so he sent his Son Jesus to die for every man, woman, and child on this planet. Because of his death and resurrection, our sins are washed away and we are joined together in the Body of Christ. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Roman and Greek men regarded women as property. In Jesus' day, Jewish men woke up each day and praise God that they were not born as a slave, a Gentile, or a woman! Wherever Christianity has gone in the world, the status of women has been elevated. Paul urges us to treat "older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity" (1 Tim. 5:2). So, if we were to follow the Bible's ethics on how to treat women, there would be no need for the #MeToo movement.

The next bit of Gospel in our epistle is that God *wants* women to study the Bible. He desires that they hear and believe his life-giving and life-changing Word. In an age when women were excluded from being disciples of Jewish rabbis or part of the philosophical debates of the Greeks, St. Paul wrote, “Let a woman learn...” (1 Tim. 2:11a), a truly revolutionary statement. For “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17).

But the best part of all is the last verse of our epistle: “Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control” (1 Tim. 2:15). Women are saved through childbearing. What does this mean—that they’re supposed to stay barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen? No, of course not! Rather, this is a reference to the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, who was “born of woman” (Gal. 4:4). Through the miracle of the incarnation, Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. He did not simply appear out of nowhere. He came from a woman, not from a man. In this way, God turned the pain of childbirth into the means by which Jesus would come to save us from our sins. So not only women, but *all people* are saved through childbearing because Mary brought baby Jesus into the world.

The Church is not a champion of feminism or women’s liberation theology, *per se*. But the Bible proves that God loves women just as much as men. Women are called to lead and serve in wonderful ways. And men are called to honor and respect women as their sisters in Christ. The Gospel changes things! The Good News of Jesus Christ transforms us into new men and women. If we are in Christ, we are a new creation. And that is the best news of all. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of ✠ the Holy Spirit. Amen.