

Epiphany Series Notes

Grace, Truth, and the Purpose of Time

(Compiled from Pastor Travis's sermon notes and study materials)

Why These Notes Are Being Shared

Receiving a request for the notes that shaped last week's sermon has prompted a necessary adjustment.

At the outset of a series of messages that depend upon one another, it is important to offer—each week—both a review of what has been proclaimed and a preview of what is anticipated. That practice should have been in place from the beginning.

What follows is offered in that spirit.

The Core Gospel Claim

The Gospel announces that **the Word became flesh**.

In that act, **grace and truth**—which do not depend on time, circumstance, or human success—enter **contingent lives**.

These are lives with limits.

Lives subject to disease, betrayal, broken relationships, poor choices, guilt, and failure.

The incarnation does not remove this complexity; it places grace and truth **within it**.

Time: How We Experience Meaning

To understand grace and truth as lived realities, we must consider time.

As long as time is experienced only as **chronos**—as sequence, as “this after that,” as what a cynic once called “one damn thing after another”—its value is difficult to grasp.

But when time is understood as **telos**, as purpose, as the goal of living, meaning becomes possible.

As Gandalf tells Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*:

“All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.”

Knowing Tolkien's faith and the suffering he endured, we can anticipate Frodo's response: he chooses sacrificial love.

Timothy and Second-Generation Faith

From this framework, we turn to the First Letter to Timothy.

Timothy represents second-generation Christians—believers with a past, as we are. Paul's instruction to him reframes what faithfulness looks like.

The **end goal (telos)** of Timothy's staying in Ephesus is not to correct the errant, defend the faith, or define the church's mission.

The goal—and the means—is **love**.

To miss this is to miss the depth of Gospel grace and truth. Paul had already called this “the more excellent way.”

Love Lost and Love Reclaimed

The church in Ephesus eventually failed—not doctrinally, but relationally.

In Revelation 2, Christ's complaint is clear:
“You have less love now than formerly.”

Recognizing this failure matters. But stopping at failure would deprive us of the Gospel's truth about grace.

Christ's judgment is not final:
“Think where you were before you fell; repent, and behave as you did at first.”

Grace opens the way to truth through repentance.

The Heart of Paul's Thesis

All of this converges in Paul's words in **1 Timothy**:

“Jesus came into the world to save sinners...
God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

This is the opportune time—the then and now—of God’s purpose in Christ.

What “Saved” Means

The language Paul uses does not describe rescue alone.

The word family (*sōzō*, *diasōzō*) means:

- to be made whole
- to be healed
- to be brought safely through
- to be restored to life

This is why Paul insists that prayer be made **for all people**.

As William Barclay observes, few passages in the New Testament stress the universality of the Gospel so clearly. God’s will to save is as wide as God’s will to create.

A Necessary Clarification

Where last week’s sermon faltered was not in conviction but in focus.

Too much attention was given to opposing interpretations that emphasize condemnation over restoration. The concern is not that such interpretations are wrong-hearted, but that they produce misery—and misery seeks company.

That posture is proving unhelpful and off-putting to those who might otherwise be open to a Gospel of love in action.

Where This Leaves Us

The Gospel does not call us to absolutize what Scripture does not, nor to mistake fear for faithfulness.

It calls us to prayer for all, love for the errant, and trust in God’s desire to heal and restore.

The goal remains what it has always been:
love, lived out in time, by grace.