

SERMON: God Wants You to Enjoy Your Life

Rev. Dr. Kristina Stone Kaiser Sept. 28, 2025

Today we're going to dive into the **book of 1 Timothy**, which is actually not a book at all, but a letter written by Paul to his disciple Timothy. And as Dan pointed out a few weeks ago, a lot of people love to hate Paul. His writings can often **seem harsh** and even **out of touch** at times. But one of the **great things** about Paul's letters is the call he offers us to **live lives that are set apart – special, and dedicated**. And when we do that, as we hear in *1 Timothy, chapter 6 and verse 17*, what we discover is that our **lives are**, in fact, chock **full of good** things that **God has provided** for us – all **for our enjoyment**.

That is a **huge thing to say**, isn't it? "*God richly provides us with EVERYTHING for our enjoyment.*"

What a statement. As we consider those words, maybe we can take a moment to **share out loud** together – *what are some things in your lives that feel like God's rich provision – if for no other reason – for your enjoyment?* [LEAVE SPACE FOR RESPONSE]

These are all so very wonderful – and things that we all share in. And truth be told, we **need space** to be able **to tap in** to these things on a **daily basis**. It reminds me a bit of a **poem by Wendell Berry**. (Any Wendell Berry fans in the room?)

He has a famous poem called ***The Peace of Wild Things*** which goes like this:

*When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

Isn't that amazing? When **fears and despair threaten** to overtake me, I go and **lie down in nature**. I come into the peace of wild things who are **not as preoccupied with suffering as I am**. I connect with the **Presence of stillness**, resting in the **grace** of the world – a grace **provided** to us **for our enjoyment** – and for that time...**I am free**.

...Selah...

It turns out, this notion of **grace** is a very **important** one, one that comes up only 14 verses into chapter 1 of 1 Timothy when Paul says:

1 Timothy 1:14 (NIV)

¹⁴ The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

We might helpfully recall that “**Grace**” is **defined** as: **Acceptance or Favor** – a favor that is **unmerited even**. Grace is **acceptance we didn't earn** – it's the offering of **provision for our enjoyment** even when we don't see what we could have done to deserve it.

Maybe if you are brave enough to be honest, perhaps by a **show of hands**, Have any of us **been rude this week**? How about **impatient? Condescending**, anyone?

What are the ways in which we **could personally use grace** in regards to just this past week? **Who** are the people in our lives that **could have benefitted** from a little **grace from us** this past week?

We don't really think about it, but **grace** is one of those things that kinda **makes the world go round**...because **ideals** are historically **difficult to live up to**.

I believe in a **good, healthy meal plan**. But I **don't live up to** that ideal every day of the year. In fact, there are certain times when I **actively pause my ideal** in favor of **celebration**.

I believe whole heartedly in living a **loving, giving generous life**. And also – there are days when I **actively dodge being helpful**.

I am two-feet-fully-in on having **grace for people**, and maybe it doesn't hurt that I'm a **heart type** on Enneagram personality assessments. But there are **still** an uncanny number of moments where **people just annoy me**.

The truth of the matter is, **without grace, nothing else works**.

So we **need Grace**. Another thing Paul says we **need is Faith**.

By the books, faith is **about believing**. *Do we believe that God will come through, richly providing everything for our enjoyment in spite of ourselves?*

Certainly, we **have faith in other things**. Unless the car is broken, we have faith that when we hit the **accelerator pedal**, our car will **propel forward**. We have faith that if we **drop a ball**, unless we're dropping that ball in space, that it will move in **a downward motion**...

We also have faith **in other people**. We are prone to believing in people **even when they don't believe in themselves**. When someone tells us they'll meet us at 5pm on Wednesday, we usually believe them.

This is the essence of faith. **It's belief, trust, and confidence**. It's what can help us, as Wendell Berry states in his poem, to *lay worries and fears aside*. And just as Berry's poem suggests, it's **nothing we have to drum up within us**.

Berry says, *"I lay down in an area that helps me connect with Stillness & Peace. And as I do, my reactive self falls away."*

From a faith perspective, we know this to be the **result of Jesus** pouring that faith out onto us. **Instead of** being *under the waterfall of suffering*, we stand under the **waterfall of Grace, Faith, and Love**. Imagine that for a moment! What does it look like for us to take a **step back** from the waterfall of **worry and fear**, and into the **waterfall of Grace, Faith, and Love**, *poured out on us by Jesus*?

And as this shift occurs in us, suddenly, **shifts occur in our outward behaviors**. Maybe we get excited about going to the **Fair Trade Cabinet** out front and making purchases that **support fair wages** and **good ecological practices**.

Maybe we make a choice to **lessen** the amount of **meetings on our calendar** so that we can **prioritize a relationship** in our lives and **communicate love** to them.

Whatever it is, **Paul reports** to Timothy that *Grace, Faith and Love were poured out over him*. ...And the **same is true for us**. Each and every one of us could insert our name into that sentence:

The grace of our Lord was poured out on me (insert your name) abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

And that being the case, all of those things are **available to us** and available **for us to give** to others in order **to become** the *hands and feet of Jesus here and now today*, to *live out our mission here at FPC* – to **choose welcome** and to **love our neighbor** with all of our heart, mind, and soul.

To be that sort of community – to be a **Matthew 25 church** that seeks to participate in *dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty*, **we need this grace, hope, and love**. It's what enables anything else that would come from us.

And so Paul goes on in his letter to Timothy to talk more about what will empower us to live into this missional sort of life. One of the first things he tells Timothy is: *Don't forget to pray*.

1 Timothy 2:1 (NIV)

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.

So...in this world where **Jesus is pouring Grace, Faith, and Love into us**, Paul seems to say that we should **use that** Grace, Faith and Love **to pray** for absolutely **everyone**.

And he tells us to this because of 1 Timothy chapter 2, verse 4:

1 Timothy 2:4 (NIV)

⁴ *[God] wants all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

and that we should do that **because God** is interested in **seeing all people saved**.

Just as God wants us to be able to lay down our sufferings and experience things like peace and love – for our enjoyment – so it is for everyone else. We hear in the Gospels numerous times that *Jesus has compassion on the people because they were helpless and harassed – like sheep without a shepherd*.

In other words, when our **faith isn't doing so well**, God **feels for us**. When we are **afraid** or feeling **unloved**, God is **grieved with us**.

And the **same is true** for those who we **feel grieved for**. Paul tells us in Chapter 2: *Pray for people. Intercede on their behalf*. If it serves you, maybe even right now, if you'd like, maybe take a pencil from the back of your pew and **jot down** anyone you might **feel prompted to pray for**. Who do you know that needs *God's Hope, Faith, and Love poured onto them*?

These prayers are so helpful because they **can fortify us** for those moments when we **drift away** from the **ways** in which we **want to live**. And this **happens to all of us**. When we **get tired or busy**, we may well be especially **prone** to it. And what Jesus' life models for us is that the **only anecdote** to these shifts is **time in Presence**.

Wendell Berry says, "*I go out into nature*." **Jesus** says, "*I go up the mountain to pray*." And as we do, we **begin to shift**, to come **back into alignment**. We come back **into balance**.

This may be another thing we want to **make a note of** in the margins of our programs:

- *What in my life feels out of balance?*

In the context of the American **pursuit of happiness**, in the context of **burnout** or **exhaustion**, in the context of **whatever drives us**, what do we **notice** that **feels out of balance**?

Is it the **seeking of approval** from others?

Is it that we're **struggling in our personal relationships**?

Is there **anything else** that we're **putting our hope in** as we pursue things like security, meaning, and a voice at the table?

Paul, 1 Timothy 6:17 tells us – rather than putting our hopes in these things, **instead put our hope on God, who richly provides – not will provide, but does provide – us with everything for our enjoyment.**

And so we return again to that question of balance. Is there anything in our lives that's getting a **larger piece** of our time, money, or energy than it **ought to?**

For me, as some of you may know, this has been an **important question** in my life over the last 13 years or so. I have found that I've had to **frequently re-evaluate** how things are going. I've had to **make choices** that **prioritize my values**. I've had to create **plans** for myself that reflect **how I want to live**. And this **doesn't always make me feel successful by the world's standards**.

But I can tell you that **my quality of life** and my **sense of relational connection** has only continued to **increase** as I say yes to this practice.

And because **just identifying** it is probably **not enough** for it to come into balance, we may also want to ask ourselves, ***"What can I do this week to help me feel more balanced?"***

It may or may not look like *resting by the presence of still waters*. It may or may not look like going *up the mountain to pray*. Maybe it looks like connecting **in the garden** or **greeting the sun** as it rises or sets. Maybe it looks like having yourself a **proper tea party** and **inviting God to join you**.

Whatever it looks like for you, **Paul** is offering each of us a very **important message** in his letter to Timothy: *That God is providing us everything – not just to nourish up, not just out of utter necessity – but specifically for our enjoyment. And not just for our enjoyment, but for the enjoyment of all.*

Short Prayer: Lord, we thank you for this truth. Would it continue to take root in us as we enter into a time of silence.