

## Sermon Text – Sunday, October 19, 2025 – Pastor Paula Kraus

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Luke 18:1-8; 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Jeremiah 31:27-34**  
**Scripture for Message: 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 “God’s Word”**

This scripture reading opens an opportunity for some teaching – so, I am going to talk about our Holy Bible, and I am going to lean heavily on what the Wednesday Morning Bible Study group has learned over the past several weeks.

What is the Bible, how did we get these scriptures and why do we need it?

How would it make you feel to look at sacred scripture as a book of rules? I wonder if thinking that way about this library of writings takes on a more punitive quality since most of us can never live up to the “rules.” Most Bible scholars take on the notion that the Bible is not an instruction book or a book of rules, but the Bible does contain for us examples of how people in various places, at different points in time navigated the issues of their day. Our Holy Scriptures, this Bible, is – as Paul writes to Timothy – useful for teaching, for reproof and correction, and for training in righteousness. These scriptures contain the tools that we can use to guide our living according to the will of God. Turning to the Bible is helpful and gives us peace but it won’t fix all our modern dilemmas, although it most assuredly will enable us to get through what we might be going through.

Who thinks that God dictated the Bible? Paul writes to Timothy that God inspires all scripture – Paul uses the Greek word *theoneustos* and that is the only incidence of anyone using that word anywhere ever. *Theoneustos* is a word Paul created to mean God-breathed, Paul created it because no other word in his vocabulary could describe what God is doing in our scriptures. Our scriptures are God’s words and not man’s. Certainly, we know that God inspired men to write, and the inspired authors had true insight from God into the topic being addressed – however the God-inspired author does not know all things, cannot know all things. That is to say God inspired the biblical writers in certain situations at certain times but did not endow the scripture writers with the knowledge to address all situations for all times.

So, we are correct when we say that the Bible is the living, inspired Word of God. Our Scriptures reveal God’s character, love, and redemptive plan for creation. Inspiration does not mean that God dictated messages to those who wrote the Bible. Rather, the Holy Spirit communicated through the human writers the very words of God, the result being that the personalities of the authors came through without changing God’s message one bit. Thus, what Paul

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writes in his letters to various churches has a different tone of voice than the Gospel writers like Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. Similarly, each of the four Gospels are different written by different people for unique occasions.

This library of Books, written by inspired men of God, is God's personal revelation of God's self. It is a divine love story of God's relationship with the humanity God created. I wonder if God inspired the biblical writers so that humanity would know who we are and why we matter. From Genesis to Revelation the Bible reveals God's character and the faithful steadfastness of God's love for us.

Paul writes this letter to Timothy urging him to proclaim the message, and be persistent in doing so. Why? Paul writes – “For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths.” Do you know what Paul is writing about, have you experienced someone you know saying something dubious about scripture and believing it to be true. I can honestly say that I have heard even ministers of the faith twist the words of scripture to suit their own agendas or to validate their personal beliefs. I wonder if these are the “false teachers” our New Testament warns about.

I am thinking about more than sayings like “money is the root of evil” we know that is twisting Paul's words to Timothy. Also, the saying that “God will never give you more than what you can bear” which is often used to comfort people. This is not actually what is in our scriptures. There is a verse in 1 Corinthians 10 which says, “God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.” Which is more about God helping us deal with temptation, not every tricky thing in life. My point is that over the centuries we have, preachers and lay-people have, sometimes twisted God's word to say what they wanted others to hear. Not always maliciously, but sometimes our misinterpretations of scripture and scriptural references have had dire consequences for others. Our Wednesday bible study group has learned you must take the context of certain scriptural references into consideration to better understand the meaning. A good example is what is written in Deuteronomy 22, some of those rules just do not apply in our modern world.

Then there are those who look beyond scripture for the answers to life's struggles, thinking that what God and Jesus offer us is archaic and no longer applicable to modern life. Have you ever heard from someone that the Bible is

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outdated, contradictory, and cannot possibly be accurate? It is true that scholars compiled the Bible we use today to its present form around sixteen hundred years ago. It is also true that while the Bible we read in this congregation has sixty-six books, the Catholic Bible has added seven making theirs seventy-three books long. The Greek and Russian Orthodox Bibles have seventy-nine. None of this makes our Bible or theirs any less than the accurate story of God's unconditional love for us.

How do we trust the authority of our Bible since the compilation or canonicity process occurred more than sixteen hundred years ago or longer? First, the Bible can be trusted because of the meticulous preservation of God's word through human language and materials. Thousands of people sacrificed their lives so that we can have a readable, trustworthy Bible. In addition, although the canonization process took place centuries ago, in 1947 a young goat herder discovered what would become known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls were found to be the oldest and most trusted manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible and have been the basis for most Old Testament Bible translations since. The discovery of those scrolls affirmed the accuracy and authenticity of the scriptures we have today. In the case of the New Testament, there are thousands of handwritten manuscripts of the books making up this collection. Although none of them original, scholars can through them determine with a high degree of certainty what the earliest manuscripts said.

So, let's talk about translations. How many Bible translations are there, and which ones are the most accurate? To my point, as of August 2025 the Bible has been translated into more than seven hundred languages. We believe that the Bible is infallible or inerrant, meaning that it is completely true. When Paul instructs Timothy to convince, rebuke, and encourage with the utmost patience in teaching he reminds his young protégé that he has a solid foundation through his learning in Scripture. Paul reminds Timothy to trust the authority of scripture and not turn away from listening to the truth as some will. Even though our Bible has been copied, translated, recopied, and retranslated scribes conducted this process with careful attention to the existing manuscripts of the time, also only copies. Because we should also note that there are no existing original manuscripts – everything from Genesis to Revelation has been copied, recopied, translated, and retranslated – even the Dead Sea Scrolls are not original manuscripts but were probably meticulously copied from what was available at the time.

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Now we have many different versions of the Bible translated into English. That topic was the source of one of our Bible Study lessons in September. The fact that there are different Bible versions has led some to claim that there are glaring discrepancies in the scriptures. Many people claim that the Bible cannot contain truths if even the Gospel writers had different interpretations of events, but I wonder if those different interpretations are what verify the validity of scripture. Wouldn't the stories all agree if they were fabricated? The Bible we commonly read in this congregation is the New International Version (NIV). It is a thought-for-thought version focusing on ideas rather than word-for-word translation but that translation keeps the original meaning. We know though that even within the NIV version there are subtle differences which you might notice when we read responsively, sometimes the Bible I read from, which is also an NIV Bible, has different wording than what you read, maybe because of different publishing houses or years of publication. The printouts I give our Elder each week to read are usually from the New Revised Standard Version Bible which is a Word-for-Word translation keeping the meaning and structure as close to the original as possible – these versions are sometimes harder to read because of long sentences and complicated grammar. Regardless of the version you choose to read, know that all versions are accurate – there is no best version only the version that is best for you.

Paul, in this section of his letter to Timothy, wants Timothy to understand the importance of scripture – using words inspired and God-breathed affirming the authoritative nature of scripture to authenticate the Gospel message. This leads me to wonder if we do ourselves an injustice when we leave our Bibles on the bookshelf and only “hear” God's words when they are read on Sunday mornings. Paul writes that scripture is useful for teaching . . . so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. We read from the book of Jeremiah God's words to God's people saying, “after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts” we can only know the Lord if we read and study the words of the Lord in scripture.

Knowing what is in our Bible is most important, maybe not always being able to quote scripture and verse but we most certainly should know what is and isn't in our Holy Scriptures. Why is that important? Do you think Satan and Satan's followers know the Bible? Absolutely they do, I am sure there are people who can accurately quote scripture better than you or me, but don't live

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according to God's will. If you want to be able to spot false teachings and lies the world tries to tell you, then you need to know what the Bible really says about certain things. There are many ways to twist God's word to suit the world's purposes.

Bottom line – for Paul, Scripture leads to a deep and profound faith in Jesus Christ – it attests to who God is and what God has done for us and for our salvation, especially as that witness is manifested in Jesus Christ. What is important for Paul, and that which he stresses to Timothy, is that we continue in what we have learned, and though we may be inclined to get at an understanding of faith in Jesus Christ through different paths, if those paths lead to a deeper faith and a solid commitment to Christ, then they should be regarded as viable and fitting paths to faith for contemporary times.<sup>1</sup> I hardly think that the Holy Spirit stopped moving writers with inspiration from God just because the scriptures we have now were put together in this Bible centuries ago. Scripture provides the standard by which humans are to be judged – it is our lifeline for living according to the will of God. Timothy in this respect symbolizes all Christians who must be strong and persistent to avoid the pitfalls and dangers of this world and to avoid hypocrisy within. Know your Bible, read it, study it, choose one that suits your needs and know that these Holy Scriptures are the inspired word of God, God-breathed and inerrant for God's intended purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> Cleophus J. Larue. "2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 – Connecting the Reading with the World" *Connections Year C, Vol 3*. eds. Green, Long, Powery, Rigby. WJK. 2019. Print. 401-402