

That Day

2 Timothy 4:6-8

October 24, 2010

Do you remember that day? You know ... that Day!

September 11, 2001 ... November 22, 1963 ... June 6, 1944 ... December 7, 1941 ... October 29, 1929 ... April 14, 1865 ... July 4, 1776.

Do you remember that day? The day that stands above the rest in memory, because on that day, on that specific day, something specific happened that changed our history, for better or for worse, forever? After that day, because of the events of that day, we were never again the same.

Do you remember that Day? The day God raised Jesus Christ from death?

Yes, we do! We do remember that day, not a date on the calendar, day and month and year, but a day in the week, the first day in the week, the first day in every week.

Every Sunday -- today! -- we remember that day. We remember what God did on that day, on that first day of the week, when God raised Jesus Christ from death. That day stands above the rest in our memory, because on that day, on that specific day, something specific happened that changed everything! After that day, because of the events of that day, we have never again been the same.

Do you remember that day? Do you think about that day, about the ways that day has changed our history forever?

There is another day explicitly referred to in the New Testament as that Day. You will find it mentioned in several of the gospels and in the letters of Paul. Paul speaks of that Day in the passage you heard me read this morning from his letter to Timothy:

... now there is waiting for me the victory prize of being put right with God, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that Day.

On that Day. That Day is a day that has not yet come. That Day is a day that has not yet come, but a day that will come, a specific day when something specific will happen that will change everything! On that Day, the One who was raised -- Jesus, our living Lord -- will come ... again.

What do you see when you think about what lies ahead for you? What do you see when you think about what lies ahead for humanity? What do you see when you think about what lies ahead for this earth? What does the future hold?

Well, I don't know. We can't see that far ahead. It depends on so many variables, on the twists and turns of time and circumstance and human choice. How can we know?

We do know! We do know what the future holds! In the future, at time of God's choosing, that Day will come, that specific Day will come, and all will be changed forever. And so we wait for the Day, eagerly. We wait with love for Jesus to appear.

We wait. We wait. Christians live future-oriented lives. Faith is always, by definition, future-oriented. We put our faith in what God will do. Because we have seen what God has already done, we put our faith in what God has still to do, and so we live in hope and not in despair. As people of faith, twenty-five years old or fifty-five years old or ninety-five years old, we know the best is still to come!

Paul knew the best was still to come, because he was a person of faith. As he approached the end of his life, he was still looking ahead, still and always looking toward that Day, still and always living toward that Day. And as he wrote this letter, as he contemplated the end of his life and the end of his work, as he prepared to pass on the mantle of apostleship to Timothy and to others like Timothy, as he spoke of the prize that was waiting for him on that Day, the prize that is waiting for all who wait with love for Jesus to appear on that Day, he took stock of his life.

I have done my best in the race, I have run the full distance, I have kept the faith.

Wow! What a thing to be able to say!

*I have done my best in the race ...
I have run the full distance ...
I have kept the faith ...*

Wouldn't you want to be able to say that when the day comes when you take stock of your life? You can! You can! You have all the time you need to be able to do what you need to do to be able to say just that! You have this day to get ready for that Day!

This day, keep the faith!

No one and no thing -- nothing -- can take your faith from you. You can let it go, but it cannot be taken from you. You can give it up, but you cannot lose it. You can set it aside, but you cannot outgrow it. Your faith -- the trust you invest in God, the trust you invest in what God will do on the basis of what God already has done -- your faith is yours to choose, yours to keep.

So keep it! Hang on to it! Live by it! Don't neglect it and don't put your trust where it doesn't belong, in people or in things that will only disappoint you. This day and for as many days as are left for you, keep the faith!

This day, run the full distance!

What is the full distance? However far you have still to go! Whatever time you have left to live, whatever distance you have yet to travel in this life, run! Run with strength and determination. Run with joy and with expectation, because you are running toward Jesus, because you are running for Jesus, because you are running with Jesus.

Don't stop along the way, go all the way! Don't give it up, but keep on keeping on! Don't slow down, but keep running full speed ahead! This day and for as many days as are left for you, keep running!

This day, do your best in the race!

Do your best! Don't worry that what you do won't be enough. Don't worry that what you do won't be good enough. Do your best and know that what you have done is your best. You can only and need only offer to God what you are and what you have, the best of what you are and the best of what you have. This day and for as many days as are left for you, do your best!

Do your best in the race, run the full distance, keep the faith. You can do it! You will do it! We will do it together!

That's what we do Sunday by Sunday. Sunday by Sunday we gather to encourage each other along the way. Sunday by Sunday we gather to remember together that Day, the Day that changed everything for us, the day God raised Jesus Christ from death. And Sunday by Sunday we gather together to wait, to wait for that Day, to wait with love for that Day when Jesus will appear ...