

Order of Worship for January 26, 2025 (A)

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you,

C: and also with you.

Opening Hymn: “*Christ Our Human Likeness Sharing*” – **Hymn #847**

Confession and Forgiveness

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

ALL: “**Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**” (Matthew 28:19-20)

P: Christ Jesus, You have given us to do ministry, to be Your servant in sharing Your Gospel to the whole world. But so often we fail.

C: We think, “Let someone else do it.” “I don’t know what to say.” “I don’t have enough time.” “I have enough just taking care of me.” “I don’t know where to start.” We pay church workers to do that.”

P: You have promised that whoever is ashamed of You, You will be ashamed of in heaven.

ALL: Lord, have mercy.

P: Jesus Christ died on the cross to take away our sins. Now He has given to us His Church the gifts of God’s Word, the forgiveness of sins, Baptism, and Holy Communion to bring the Gospel into the lives of people we meet every day and to people all over the world. And He gives us His servants, called ministers, to equip us for His work. As a called servant of Christ Jesus, I forgive You all Your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm:

P: I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings

C: and shall not be put to shame,

P: I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever;

C: with my mouth I will make known Your faithfulness to all generations.

P: Let the heavens praise Your wonders, O LORD,

C: Your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!

ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings

C: and shall not be put to shame.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: and also with you.

Prayer of the Day:

P: Let us pray . . . Lord God, You showed Your glory and led many to faith by the works of Your Son. As He brought gladness and healing to His people, grant us these same gifts and lead us also to perfect faith in Him, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

Hymn: “We Are Called to Stand Together” - Hymn #828

Reading from Book of Acts: Acts 20:28-35

R: Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Reading: Titus 1:1-9

R: Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in His word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;

To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover

of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: Luke 10:1-9

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke , the tenth chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where He Himself was about to go. And He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Children’s Message (8:30 only)

Sermon Hymn: *“By All Your Saints in Warfare”* - **Hymn #517 vs. 1, 11,3**

Sermon: “Faithful” - Titus 1:1-9

The church and the world don’t see time the same way. The world starts celebrating Christmas as soon as Thanksgiving is over, the church says Christmas only begins Christmas day and lasts for twelve days, after the world has moved on. The church encourages us to spend time in worship not looking at a clock. The world wants us to check our watches and phones so we can move on to the next thing. Time doesn’t always work the same way.

We see that here today. Since the Sunday after Epiphany is when we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus, and that used to be the Sunday before classes started for the spring semester at Iowa State, things used to line up neatly. The new life of baptism and the start of the semester thematically went together well. We began a new semester remembering that we have been marked by God, called by name, made children of God and adopted into God’s family. A new start, a new beginning, lined up together.

Now post-pandemic, Iowa State has a longer winter term between the fall and spring semesters. In order to fit that in, the winter break goes a week longer. Now, instead of starting the week before MLK Jr day, it starts the week of MLK Jr day, which means it started on a Tuesday. And this year, the dangerous cold gave a virtual start to the semester, for an even stranger beginning.

But now, we're two weeks past remembering the baptism of Jesus. We're past MLK Jr day, and the presidential inauguration. And instead of just moving onto the usual lessons, today we remember Titus, one of Paul's coworkers. What does that have to do with the beginning of the semester? More than you might think at first glance.

For me, it brings back fond memories. The chapel at my alma mater, Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, is called the Chapel of Saint Timothy and Saint Titus. Timothy and Titus, you see, were pastors in the early Church and coworkers of the apostle Paul, and so were good people for us to reflect on as we went through our studies. In fact, the stained-glass window that used to be behind the altar in the chapel had beautifully detailed images of two men robed in white. One is depicted as a smooth-faced young man holding a shepherd's crook (the symbol of the pastoral office) and a palm branch (the symbol of Christian martyrs). The other is portrayed as an older man with gray beard and bald head. Both of them were pastors, and together they represent the student body of Concordia Seminary, both "first" and "second" career students. Timothy was the young one, and Titus was the old one.

We really don't know all that much about Titus. Despite being one of Paul's friends and coworkers, he's not mentioned in the book of Acts during Paul's missionary journeys described there. We know that he's a Greek believer, and that sometimes created tension when he was in more Jewish areas, especially with the strict Jewish Christians when he accompanied Paul to Jerusalem. We know that he accompanied Paul on his final journey to Corinth, because Paul's second letter to Corinth speaks of him going. We know that at some later stage, while Paul was in prison, Titus was sent to Dalmatia. It seems that Titus was Paul's go-to man, his problem solver, his fixer. When there had some chronic church problem, Titus was the one who was sent to clean up the mess. In Corinth, in Ephesus, in Crete. Titus put things in order and appointed church leaders to keep things that way.

The role we know Titus held the most, and the subject of the letter that bears his name, is his time on the island of Crete. He certainly had his hands full organizing the new churches there. The people on the island of Crete were not the easiest to work with, and Titus became somewhat discouraged. Crete was an island known for its lies and its liars. Later in the letter, Paul reminds Titus, "One of Crete's own prophets has said it: 'Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, idle bellies'. There was a Greek verb "to Cretanize," which means "to lie and cheat. Truthiness and disputes over fact checking would not have been unknown there. Despite their reputation, though, the Cretans were still loved by God. They still needed to be told about the good news of Jesus, about the truth of God's forgiveness for them. And that's why Titus was there.

God, who cannot lie and will not lie, is bringing truth to Crete through Paul and Titus. And this truth is not meant to sit on a shelf to be admired. It is not simply a weapon to win arguments. Truth is not static and it certainly is not stagnant. It does more than set the record straight. Truth bursts on the scene and changes everything. Truth leads to godliness.

God doesn't lie. He can be trusted absolutely. The Gospel Paul preached, the Gospel Titus preached, is founded on the rock-solid basis of the reliability, the trustworthiness, the

faithfulness of the one true God. This was extraordinary news to the average first-century person, who was used to there being many gods, none of whom could be relied upon. Crete was especially connected with Zeus, the head of the Greek gods who was known for his unfaithfulness to his wife, Hera, and for changing his mind.

Part of the ‘good news’ of the early Christian gospel was that the One True God, the God of Israel, was now making himself known in and to all the world as the utterly reliable God, the one you could trust. This, in fact, is the force of the opening verse Paul writes to Titus. Paul introduces himself as a slave of this God, and an apostle – an emissary, an accredited herald – of Jesus as the true king. The status he has in relation to God and Jesus comes directly from ‘the faith of God’s chosen people’ and ‘the knowledge of the truth that goes with godliness’. Paul claims that in Jesus as Messiah the age-old faith of Israel has now been vindicated, that the gospel message is rooted in God’s faithfulness to his promises and shaped by the ancient Israelite beliefs.

One reason Paul had left Titus on the island of Crete was that he might organize the local churches and “set in order” the things that were lacking. That phrase is a medical term; it was applied to the setting of a crooked limb. The Greek word tupos (“pattern”) gives us our English word type. The word originally meant “an impression made by a die.” Titus was to live so that his life would be like a “spiritual die” that would impress itself on others. This involved good works, sound doctrine, a seriousness of attitude, and sound speech that no one—not even the enemy—could condemn.

That’s why the elders and overseers Titus appoints can’t be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. Just as Jesus is a pattern for Paul and Titus to imitate, so are the church leaders they appoint to be patterns, impress their lives on those under their care.

The overarching pattern for Titus, then, is faithfulness. To him, Paul wrote, “Be faithful! It’s always too soon to quit!” Paul used the Greek word pistos (“faithful”) at least seventeen times in the three letters we call the Pastoral Epistles, the two letters to Timothy and the one to Titus. Be faithful to the Word, be faithful to your task, be faithful to the people to whom you minister. God is faithful!

Being faithful sets a pattern. That’s what Titus does. Titus has what it takes to be a steward of the plan. Take his cues from God’s design, unmoved by fads and fashion and felt needs. And that’s what he’s called to do as he appoints leaders who will be faithful and true, to God and to the people under their care.

And that points us to why Titus is a good person to reflect on as a new semester begins. Being faithful in attending classes and completing homework assignments is a good way to start the semester well. (Even if one of my college advisors told us to get behind early so we had more time to catch up.) Being truthful in a world full of lies and deepfakes and partisan fact checking makes you stand out and builds trust. Spending too much time partying isn’t going to help you pass your classes. Being self-controlled and disciplined will.

Like Titus on Crete, we live in a world where it's hard to tell the truth. People will say things like "I've made up my mind. Don't confuse me with the facts." But that makes the message Titus shares even more important. In a world that is so often faithless, be faithful. In a world full of lies, be truthful. Keep doing what God gives you to do. Stay faithful. God is faithful to you.

3rd Article of Creed and Explanation:

Prayer for the Ministry:

P: Christ Jesus, we thank You for the gift of the ministry:

C: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

P: Help us to remember that as Your people we are Your link between Yourself and others; You have chosen us to be Your priests.

C: "You will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:6)

P: "And you will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God." (Isaiah 61:6)

C: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9) "From Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve His God and Father—to Him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen." (Revelation 1:5-6)

P: We thank You also for those You have called like Titus to be public ministers to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments.

C: "So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." (Ephesians 4:11-2)

P: Help them to especially equip us through the forgiveness of sins.

C: "Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you.' And with that He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'" (John 20:21-23)

P: Protect Your church workers this can be said of them:

C: "Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain." (Titus 1:7)

P: Guide them to point us to You:

C: “For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.” (2 Corinthians 4:5)

P: Help us to remember that You call public church workers through us Your Church:

C: “And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord Himself and to show our eagerness to help.” (2 Corinthians 8:18-19)

P: Grant that that may be able to say of themselves:

C: “Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of His body, which is the Church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness.” (Colossians 1:24-5)

P: Other concerns . . .

P: All this we pray in Your name.

C: Amen

8:30 continues . . .

Hymn: “God of the Prophets, Bless the Prophet’s Sons” - Hymn #682

Lord’s Prayer:

Closing Prayer:

P: O almighty God, by Your Son, our Savior, You have always given to Your Church on earth faithful shepherds to guide and feed Your flock. Therefore we pray, make all pastors diligent to preach Your Word and minister Your means of grace, and grant Your people wisdom to follow in the way that leads to life eternal; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: “The Star Proclaims the King Is Here” - Hymn #399

Postlude

11 AM continues . . .

Sharing Our Ministry

Offering:

Service of the Sacrament

Preface:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: lift up Your hearts.

C: We lift them up to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: it is good and proper so to do.

P: It is truly good, right, and proper that we should in all times and all places give thanks to You, almighty God, everlasting Father for You are faithful, which we can see in how You fulfilled Your promises in Your Son, Christ Jesus, our Lord who showed Himself to be Your Son, suffered in our place, and rose on Easter. Therefore with angels and all the army of heaven we praise and make great Your holy name, evermore praising You and singing . . .

ALL: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

P: Blessed are You, O Lord of heaven and earth, for You are faithful and through that faithfulness You give us the faith to trust in You. Send Your Holy Spirit on us as we come to Jesus' altar to receive His true body and blood in Holy Communion, so that we remain faithful in our trust in Him to forgive us of our sins. All this we pray as You taught us to pray . . .

Lord's Prayer:

Words of our Lord:

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

Distribution Hymns: *"God of the Prophets, Bless the Prophet's Sons"* - **Hymn #682**
"Preach You the Word" - **Hymn #586**

Song After Communion: *"Sent Forth by God's Blessing"* - **Hymn #643**

Prayer After Communion

P: O almighty God, by Your Son, our Savior, You have always given to Your Church on earth faithful shepherds to guide and feed Your flock. Therefore we pray, make all pastors diligent to preach Your Word and minister Your means of grace, and grant Your people wisdom to follow in the way that leads to life eternal; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: “*The Star Proclaims the King Is Here*” - **Hymn #399**

Postlude