

“*Holding Faith and a Good Conscience*”

The Reverend Dr. Robert M. Zanicky

May 3, 2009

First Presbyterian Church

Wilkes-Barre, PA

I Timothy 1:1-5, 18-2:6

First, thank you (Wyoming Seminary Madrigals) for blessing and inspiring us this morning. Thank you.

Second, my sermon will be brief. I'll only address “Holding Faith.” “A Good Conscience” will come later.

One day a fellow was driving home from work, and he decided to stop and watch a local Little League Baseball game being played in the park near his home. He sat down behind the bench on the first base line. He leaned forward and asked one of the boys playing what the score was. “We’re behind 14 to nothing,” he answered with a smile on his face. “Wow,” the man said, “you don’t look very discouraged.” “Discouraged?” the boy said, with a puzzled look written across his face. “Why should we be discouraged? We haven’t even been up to bat yet!”

Now there is optimism!

There is looking to the future!

There is faith in oneself and in one’s future!

This is a great time to be alive!! Let me give you a text. “This is the day the Lord has made, we will be glad and rejoice in it!”

As I’ve proclaimed on many occasions the Christian faith is future oriented! It is optimistic! Not naïve. Not credulous! But- Faith filled for the future!

This morning I read from the first chapter of I Timothy. According to the letter, Paul (the elder) is writing to Timothy, a young person learning the ropes, learning his lessons of life, and sharing his faith with his community. He’s becoming a leader. Paul speaks of Tim as a son; a son in the faith. Paul encourages Tim to keep on track. For the aim, our purpose is love – which comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith. And Paul basically repeats himself several verses later. He gives young Tim a charge to hold on to his faith and his good conscience.

Paul knew that faith was essential for this young man.

Faith –

- a commitment to the future!
- a belief in the future!
- a purpose for the future!

How many of you are Trekkies? (Hands up). Well, actually according to “Newsweek” “We’re All Trekkies Now.” Trekkies, you know - Devotees of “Star Trek”. The original, or the 10 movies (the 11th out next week. I’ll be in line at midnight for my ticket, wearing my Spock ears – not really, but I’ll see the movie). There have also been five subsequent Trek T.V. series. “Star Trek” debuted in September 1966. “It was upbeat, not

dystopian or cautionary – 180 degrees from paranoid scenarios about nuclear Armageddon and cosmic doom, which percolated through the 50's and came to a high boil in the early 60's"

"Star Trek" declared, "Yes there is a future!" A hopeful future where peace and prosperity are realized, where people of different races live and work together, where women stand side by side with men, and work together equally.

The cultural "can do" is specifically American, and if one searches (and it won't require too deep of a search) one will find the Judeo-Christian heritage as instrumental in that future orientation, creativity and purpose!

For all you Tim's – hear this.

MetLife (the insurance company) has just released their study of the 2009 American Dream. They polled the American landscape, seeking to find out how the economic crisis has affected the American dream. They studied a cross section of US citizens, in all generations and ethnic groups. What they found out was that most Americans are still optimistic that they can achieve the dream – a redefined American dream with a greater focus on family, marriage and financial security. (You may read the entire study on-line at MetLife.com)

Briefly, Generation Xers (born between 1965 and 1978) and Generation Yers (born between 1979 and 1991) - termed Generation Flex – are more confident in their ability to weather the current economic storm than other generations. Twenty seven percent of Gen. X now count "marriage" as part of their definition of the American dream, up from 18% in 2008. Both Gen. X and Y believe their own actions will have the greatest impact on their ability to achieve the dream. " Self reliance reflects the social, economic and political eras during which the Flex generations came of age." (p.30)

The study concludes: "The American spirit of optimism is unwavering and is perhaps one of the country's greatest assets as we emerge from the crisis". (p.35)

Paul encourages his son in the faith, to keep faith in God's future! To hold on tenaciously to "faith"! How one conceives the future will determine his/her accomplishments. My friends, all of you Timothy's out there, faith will change your life!!

Amen.